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THE GIFT OF PENTECOST



THE
GIFT OF PENTECOST

MEDITATIONS
ON THE HOLY GHOST

BY
FATHER MESCHLER
OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN
BY
LADY AMABEL KERR

"If thou didst know the gift of God."—JOHN IV. 10

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INTRODUCTION.

PENTECOST is Nature's summer feast.

Heaven pours forth the spirit of life upon the earth. It bursts forth in streams of light and warmth ; it waves with the ears of corn in the harvest-fields ; it sways with the fruit-laden boughs ; and the crimson peonies,¹ in the midst of their dusky green foliage, are like tongues of fire fallen from heaven. The blessing of the year approaches, the feast of this earth is being prepared, and Nature is intoxicated with the profusion of life. Multitudes of feathered songsters and nightingales make melody, and even the trees shiver and whisper in the mid-day breeze, speaking the one to the other as though in a dream. Nature is keeping its Pentecost.

But Pentecost is also the summer feast of the ecclesiastical year.

Amid the showers and storms of the winter night the Sun of justice appeared to us. On Easter Day He rose for ever, victorious and glorious ; on Ascension Day He reached His zenith ; and now He sends us the Holy Ghost, as the fruit of His coming and work, to remain

¹ Peonies are called Pentecost roses in Germany.

with us and perfect what He began. Yes, the Holy Ghost is the glorious fruit of the life and sufferings of Jesus ; He is the realisation and fulfilment of the promises, and His work is to make grow and ripen and gather in the harvest which was sown and watered by the Redeemer. The Holy Ghost is, in a special sense, the ruler of the last age of the world.

We dedicate the following pages to the Holy Ghost as a token of the love we owe Him. Their aim is to make Him better known, and to increase His worship.

This is no easy task. The Holy Ghost is too well-known for us to be silent about Him, and too little known for us to say anything adequate to move the hearts of men to love Him. Our Lord likens Him to the gentle breeze of spring.¹ We can feel His soft, sweet breath, we can see the marvels effected by Him, but no man knows whence He comes or whither He goes. Many books have been written about the gifts and operations of the Holy Ghost, but there are very few which are able to move our hearts to love the Person of the Giver. He does not come before us in the same way as the Son of God, who meets us on our pilgrimage as the Son of Man. The Spirit dwells in the unsearchable depths of the Godhead,² and even His work in our hearts is carried on secretly and silently. In the God-

¹ John iii. 8.

² 1 Cor. ii. 10.

head, as well as in our souls, He is an abyss of mystery. Who shall scrutinise His Being? So much the more desirable is it to get, as it were, a glimpse of the Face of that Uncreated Love, whence all good things come to us.

First, then, we will attempt to gaze into the heart of the Godhead, where the Holy Ghost lives and reigns, for thus shall we learn something of the attributes of His Divine Person. Thence we will follow Him through the different modes of His operations in the manifold orders of created being, till He leads us back into the bosom of the Holy Trinity. This will give us the opportunity of touching on all the questions of the spiritual life; for, indeed, life with all its threads and fibres, and especially the supernatural life, points to the Holy Ghost as its Originator. Having achieved this flight into the realm of the Holy Ghost, we may have to carry away and hide in our bosom as a cherished memory the resolution to honour Him in a befitting manner and the method how to do so.

We have taken as our guides on this journey the great masters of theology, especially St. Thomas Aquinas, and his disciples and expounders, ancient and modern, as well as all others from whom there is something to be learned about the Holy Ghost.

May these meditations be of some use to all Christians, especially to priests and religious.

And now, O Holy Ghost, infinite Majesty

of love, great Friend and Lover of our souls, who wert given to us in holy baptism to lead us into the good land of heavenly bliss, may these poor thoughts and words, uttered with childlike simplicity in Thine honour, please Thee. Bless them! If only one soul be helped by them to gain a more living faith in Thee and a more heartfelt love for Thee, what a superabundant reward would it not be for my feeble efforts! Amen.

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CHAPTER I.

THE NAME OF THE HOLY GHOST.

THE Dove who descended on our divine Lord when He was baptised in the Jordan, the bright cloud which overshadowed Thabor at the Transfiguration, and the fiery tongues which rested on the Apostles on Mount Sion, on the Day of Pentecost, were the first visible manifestations of the Holy Ghost in this world, though they were not His first dwelling on this earth, and still less the beginning of His life. No! His home is neither in the Promised Land, nor on this earth at all, neither has it form nor space, for He dwells in immeasurable eternity, and in the unapproachable light of God. "Who that hears the name of the Holy Ghost does not at once lift up his soul to the Supreme Being, who is limited by no space, who is subject to no change, and who can be compared with no creature," says St. Basil.¹

The Holy Ghost is God. Such is His name and essence, and His divinity is our first idea about Him. We must saturate ourselves with this truth if we wish to lay in our hearts the foundation of a deep devotion to Him. Let us, therefore, begrudge no trouble and revive in our souls faith in this great truth which we learned in childhood, by: (1) considering the proofs of the divinity of the Holy Ghost, and (2) by drawing our own conclusions from them.

¹ *Lib. de Spir. S.*, c. 9.

1. Taught by Holy Scripture and tradition, we believe and confess one supreme, purely spiritual, eternal, infinite and divine Being; and in this one divine Being we distinguish three divine Persons, real and independent holders and possessors of the same divine nature, really distinct from each other, yet completely equal and undivided in the possession of the same divine essence and sovereignty. The Athanasian Creed beautifully expresses this belief when it says: "We worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity, neither confounding the Persons nor dividing the substance". The Holy Ghost is, together with the Father and the Son, one of these divine Persons; and thus, the first truth about Him which we have to believe is that He is truly God, and a real divine Person, endowed with understanding and will. If, as is the case, divine revelation calls Him true God, if it ascribes divine attributes to Him, and if all Christian tradition has, by word and deed, acknowledged and adored Him as true God, there can be no doubt on the subject.

In several passages Holy Scripture calls Him simply "God". The Old and New Testaments agree in this, and throw light on each other. St. Paul, when addressing the unbelieving Jews in Rome, whom he could not convince of the truth of Christianity, cries out, full of holy zeal: "Well did the Holy Ghost speak to our fathers by Isaias the prophet, saying: Go to this people, and say to them: With the ear you shall hear, and shall not understand: and seeing you shall see, and shall not perceive".¹ It is obvious in this passage who it was who spake to the prophet. It was none other than the Lord, the true and living God, before whose throne the seraphim stand, covering their faces and crying out: "Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God of hosts, all the earth is full of His

¹ Acts xxviii. 25, 26.

glory".¹ Again, in the first epistle to the Corinthians, St. Paul exhorts the Christians to practise purity and chastity by putting before them this elevating thought: "Know you not that you are the temple of God";² and he elaborates this thought in the course of the same epistle by saying: "Your members are the temple of the Holy Ghost".³ No one erects temples except to God; therefore the Holy Ghost is our God. St. Peter spoke with equal clearness when he manifested to Ananias the enormity of his lie. "Why," he said, "hath satan tempted thy heart, that thou shouldst lie to the Holy Ghost. . . . Thou hast not lied to men, but to God."⁴ In all these passages the Holy Ghost is called simply "God". Now it is according to St. Irenæus a rule in the interpretation of Scripture to give this name—simply and without further apposition—to the true God alone;⁵ and in this sense and in no other must it be understood about the Holy Ghost.

In Scripture, furthermore, truly divine attributes are ascribed to the Holy Ghost. His origin is divine. He proceedeth from the Father,⁶ and must therefore be of one nature with the Father. He searcheth the deep things of God.⁷ He is the Spirit of truth;⁸ and sees and foretells the things that are to come.⁹ He possesses therefore knowledge—that knowledge which God alone has of Himself; He is infallible truthfulness, nay absolute truth; and who is that but God only?

The works of the Holy Ghost also testify to His divine power. He gives new birth to men by the water of holy baptism,¹⁰ He justifies them by penance,¹¹ He pours forth supernatural virtues, especially

¹ Isa. vi. 3.² 1 Cor. iii. 16.³ 1 Cor. vi. 19.⁴ Acts v. 3, 4.⁵ St. Iren., *Adv. Hæres.*, lib. 3, c. 6.⁶ John xv. 26.⁷ 1 Cor. ii. 10.⁸ John xv. 26.⁹ John xvi. 13.¹⁰ John iii. 5.¹¹ John xx. 22.

love, into our hearts,¹ and is, therefore, the Author of grace, of forgiveness of sin, justification, purity and holiness, and is the bond of love between men and God. The whole of the supernatural life, as also the Church—divinely instituted for the imparting and preservation of that life—is a creation of the Holy Ghost; and the inherent majesty of the Church reflects back on Him. She is in truth the kingdom of the Holy Ghost, wherein He reigns as sovereign Lord and the Bestower of the gifts of grace and the offices of the Church. He is “that same Spirit who worketh, dividing to every one according to His will”;² having indeed the fulness of divine power!

In her life, her doctrine and ceremonies the Church acknowledges the Holy Ghost to be true God, and worships Him as such. In all her solemn invocations of God, in exorcisms and blessings, in the formularies for the administration of the sacraments, in the sign of the cross, in the *Gloria Patri*, in her prayers, in her professions of faith she asseverates her faith in the divinity of the Holy Ghost as well as in that of the Father and the Son, and honours and worships Him equally with them, condemning and anathematising those who despise and deny that He is God. A number of the holy Fathers of the Church—among whom may be found an Athanasius, a Gregory of Nazianzen, a Basil, a Hilary—rose up against Macedonius, Patriarch of Constantinople, who was the first to deny the divinity of the Holy Ghost, and confuted his error in the most brilliant manner. The First Council of Constantinople (A.D. 381) solemnly condemned the heresy, and—as a permanent testimony of its belief in the divinity of the Holy Ghost—inserted these grand words in the Nicene Creed: “I believe in the Holy Ghost . . . who with the Father and Son together is wor-

¹ Rom. v. 5.

² 1 Cor. xii. 11.

shipped and glorified". The Council of Trent adopted these words in its confession of faith, thereby condemning the heresy of the Socinians, a protestant-rationalistic sect which does not admit the Holy Ghost to be a real Person, but only an action and influence of God upon man.

After what has been said no special proof is required that the Holy Ghost is no mere divine power or attribute, but a true, real Person, distinct from the Father and the Son. The testimonies already brought forward have shown and proved that He is equal to the Father and the Son, that He proceeds from the Father, that He was sent by the Son as another Paraclete, that He discerns, teaches, proclaims and imparts gifts to whom he will. This cannot be said of any but a real and independent Person, and such the Church has always understood Him to be.

The Holy Ghost is therefore God, true God. It is easy to say this; but do we comprehend what the word involves? If the Holy Ghost is God, He is eternal, before all epochs of time, before the nebula of the first creation, and He is, in a word, without beginning—*æternus Spiritus Sanctus*. If the Holy Ghost is God, He is also the infinite power of God, who made out of nothing the heavens and earth, and the countless worlds and solar systems, leading them like a flock—*omnipotens Spiritus Sanctus*. If the Holy Ghost is God, He is also the omnipresence and immensity of God, and all things are present to Him, no creature is invisible to Him, or left without the aid of His sustaining hand—*immensus Spiritus Sanctus*. If He is God, He is also the Lord, the Creator, the Supporter, the Ruler of the world; He has made us and given us all things, both what we have and what we are. Whatever God has done for us or bestowed upon us has been done equally by the Holy Ghost,

and we owe it to Him. Nothing has happened to us without His loving consent and co-operation—*Dominus Spiritus Sanctus*. If the Holy Ghost is God, He is our last end, our supreme and infinite good, in the possession and embrace of whom we shall be happy for ever in eternity—*Deus Spiritus Sanctus*. “In truth,” says St. Cyril of Jerusalem, “the Holy Ghost is almighty, divine and incomprehensible—the Most Holy and Maker of all things.”¹

2. But what conclusions should we draw for ourselves from this truth that the Holy Ghost is God? First of all we should accept it, and believe in His divinity. This is the first, essential, necessary, as well as glorious homage which we owe Him. This simple act of faith contains the perfect oblation of our understanding and the submission of our heart, and is an offering both beautiful and honourable to God. Let us therefore elicit from our hearts a very fervent act of faith in the divinity of the Holy Ghost. Read over carefully and slowly the proofs of His true Godhead which have been quoted, and make it clear to yourselves that there can be no Christianity, and that you cannot be a Christian, without this belief. Your baptism, confirmation and absolution from your sins are based upon the divinity of the Holy Ghost. Let these considerations move you to join willingly and joyfully in this act of faith; and then repeat the beautiful words of the Nicene Creed: “I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is both worshipped and glorified, who spake by the prophets”. Tell the Holy Ghost how much you rejoice in being able to offer Him this homage, and how gladly you consent, with heart and tongue, to the glorious testimony which He

¹ *Catech.*, xvi., c. 3.

Himself, and the Holy Church, and so many enlightened doctors have borne to His divinity. Tell Him that you wish this act to contain all the fervour and firmness of faith which animated these witnesses, and that you wish to live and die holding it.

But adoration must follow faith. Adoration is the first-fruit of faith in God, and consists in the acknowledgment that He is in Himself the supreme good and the Author of all our good, together with the heartfelt subjection of ourselves to Him. Faith unveils to us the sun of the divine essence; adoration surrounds and adorns the lustre of the divine attributes with the created gold of the offering of our hearts. Adoration and the loving surrender of ourselves are inseparable from our idea of God. Without them God would indeed exist, but He is our God only in so far as we acknowledge and serve Him. Adoration is the highest gift which we are able to offer to God, and He will not have it bestowed on any but Himself. Let us therefore bring this homage of our hearts to the Holy Ghost; let us adore Him and acknowledge Him to be the supreme good and the source of all good; let us tell Him that we are what we are through Him, and that we hope for all things from Him. Let us offer Him in compensation for our own poverty and insufficiency the homage and praise which the heavenly hosts offer Him, and the infinite satisfaction which from all eternity He finds in the immensity and beatitude of His own Being.

The third conclusion to be drawn is the necessity of an intelligent and carefully cultivated devotion to the Holy Ghost. Under devotion are to be understood faith and adoration, expressed in many and repeated acts. Why should not these be offered by us? Is not the Holy Ghost our God—as much our God as the Father and the Son? What do we receive from

them which we do not owe likewise to the Holy Ghost? We often pray to our Heavenly Father and our Divine Saviour, and rightly so; He having been given to us as our Mediator, and being most closely united to us by reason of His human nature. But that does not exclude the duty of explicit and especial honour to the Holy Ghost. Let us examine ourselves as to the extent of the worship we offer to the Holy Ghost. It is deplorable, and yet true, that, speaking generally, the Holy Ghost is too little honoured by individuals; so little, indeed, that it can be said that a special devotion to the Holy Ghost is a rarity, and a treasure bestowed on a few privileged souls. Many Christians could in fact speak in the same words as the men of Ephesus, who, when asked by St. Paul whether they had received the Holy Ghost, replied that they did not know whether there were a Holy Ghost.¹ All Christians know quite well that the Holy Ghost is God; but when they turn to the practical fruit of such a belief, and inquire what worship they pay Him, it is quite a different matter. He is scarcely worshipped at all, scarcely even thought about! Now, if this be the result of mere thoughtlessness, the Holy Ghost will more easily pardon it, for He is all goodness and love; but any one can see that such omission is unbecoming and improper, and ought to be corrected by an endeavour to grow in the knowledge of the Holy Ghost, and to gain a deeper insight into our relations with Him.

Let us then examine ourselves about our worship of the Holy Ghost, and ask ourselves whether we really adore Him as what He is, namely, our God. What if it has occurred to us for the first time to-day that we ought to worship Him? This would indeed be a matter for sorrow and amendment. Pentecost has been given to us for the very purpose of reminding us

¹ Acts xix. 2.

of the Holy Ghost, and of renewing in us our practical devotion to Him. Let us then consider earnestly what it is that He our God requires of us, and ask ourselves how we have hitherto fulfilled these requirements. If our hearts reproach us let us be sorry, but let us try to make amends, and implore pardon for the neglect and coldness, not only of ourselves, but of the whole world. In a word, let us do that which, when at last we attain to the immediate vision of the Holy Ghost in heaven, we shall wish we had done here on earth.

CHAPTER II.

THE COUNTENANCE OF THE HOLY GHOST.

ST. PETER writes that the dearest desire of the Angels is to look on the Holy Ghost ;¹ and it must indeed be an endless delight to contemplate His countenance. But what are we to understand by the countenance of the Holy Ghost? We mean by it the characteristic property which distinguishes Him from the two other Persons, or, in other words, His own personality. In the case of a man, his name of "man" discloses to us some of his characteristics, but his countenance discloses incomparably more. So is it with the Holy Ghost. His name of "God" is great, but this He shares with the other Persons; His individuality lies in His own personality, and about this we will now try to learn something: (1) by considering what we understand by personality; (2) what the personality of the Holy Ghost is; (3) by drawing some conclusions from our considerations.

1. As in every reasonable and free being, we must admit a personality in God. God is a personal Being, *i.e.*, He possesses His nature in an independent and autonomous way, with full self-consciousness and free will, with inviolable right and unlimited authority. Reason tells us this. It is necessary to the perfection and excellence of God; otherwise He would be less than we. But faith goes farther. It and it alone assures us that in God—different in this from all other

¹ 1 Peter i. 12.

personal beings—there are not only one, but three Persons. In God there are therefore three distinct and perfect undivided bearers, holders and possessors of the fulness of the divine nature. Faith, moreover, teaches us that these three divine Persons are so related to each other that the Father is without beginning, that the Son proceeds from the Father only by generation, and that the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and the Son by spiration. But what origin had these personalities and wherein do they consist? They are three glorious substantial acts into which, as it were, the infinite, divine vitality and fecundity unfolds itself. Whereas our souls, in their interior activity, produce mere passing acts of the understanding and will, which by frequent repetition determine certain permanent inclinations and habits, the inner life of God is so superabundant that it manifests itself in three independent Persons, living, co-equal and possessors of one divine nature. What is proper to each of these Persons is that in virtue of the procession of one Person from the other, He possesses the divine nature in a way peculiar to Himself, but in constant relation to the other Persons.

2. This being presupposed, we see the divine Persons, and see what constitutes the individuality of the Holy Ghost. The Father has His beginning from no other Person, and possesses the divine nature without being begotten and without proceeding from another. This it is which marks the Person of the Father. But the Father knows Himself, and by this knowledge produces a living co-equal image of Himself, to whom He communicates His own divine nature. This is the Son of God. The mode of his origin is generation, because he was begotten by the Father through understanding and knowledge, and therefore is He called the Son, the Word, the Image of the Father, Eternal Wisdom. The Father and the Son, in

possession of the same nature, know each other, and from this knowledge proceeds love; and the expression and fruit of this love is the Holy Ghost. As the knowledge of the Father produces an image equal to Himself in essence, which is the Son, so in the same way the mutual love of the Father and the Son finds a no less perfect expression, in that, by love of each other, They communicate Their essence to a third Person, and take Him into union with Them as the fruit of Their mutual love. It is the part of true love to communicate itself and offer a gift as a pledge of love; but as there is nothing further for the Father and the Son to give to each other, because each possesses the nature of the other, so this communication can take place only by Their imparting their common nature to a third, so that He might possess it. Thus, together, They breathe forth a Third Person, proceeding from the fulness of their common love. This Person is the Holy Ghost. That is His origin. His personality, therefore, consists in this, that He proceeds from the love of the Father and the Son, and is the Person, the fruit, the expression in the Blessed Trinity of the divine love.

The personality of the Holy Ghost will be clearer to us if we consider His names. These names are taken from His nature, and reveal distinctly what is proper to His Person. They are especially three. First, He is called the Holy Ghost or Spirit. The word spirit has a double signification: it means, as in the Latin, "breath"; and also a purely spiritual, incorporeal being. Both definitions show us the nature of the Holy Ghost. In the sense of breath, it signifies the procession of the Holy Ghost through love. In the same way that the word of the mind or knowledge proceeds from the understanding, so does breath issue from the heart, which is the seat and figure of love and the emotions. The heart, moved

and impelled by love, breathes it forth in deep sighs, and such sighs are at once the expression and vehicle of love. Thus the love of the Father and Son expresses itself in a "breath," which is the true and substantial pouring forth of Their being and life. This Breath is the Holy Ghost. Therefore the mode of His origin is not called generation, as in the case of the Son, but procession or, in theological language, spiration. Let us see in what the other definition of the word "spirit" applies to the Holy Ghost. Why is He, in preference to the Father and the Son, called the "Spirit," or incorporeal Being? Because He is the Spirit of both, is the answer given by the Fathers of the Church.¹ In Him the Father and the Son are truly one Spirit. As we say of two men that they are of one mind if they are of the same opinion, and agreed in unity and love, so are the Father and the Son really one in the Holy Ghost, because He is the spiration of Their mutual love, the expression of that love, and the crown and seal of Their unity in life and love. The Holy Ghost is therefore the Spirit of both.

But the Third Person is called not only the Spirit, but the Holy Spirit. That is His usual name, which signifies that He is in a peculiar way related to holiness—that He is the Spirit of holiness; and this is for the same reason that He is the Spirit of the Father and the Son. For holiness consists before all things in the uprightness and purity of the will and love, and is, in short, unstained purity, goodness and love, immutability, perfect sincerity and sublime constancy in that very goodness and love. Now we have seen that the Holy Ghost is the Person of love in the Blessed Trinity, and that, consequently, holiness belongs peculiarly to Him, because it belongs peculiarly to the will and to love. The Holy Ghost is, there-

¹ St. Aug., *De Trin.*, v., 11; xv., 19.

fore, holiness, not only because He communicates holiness to creatures, but because He is, in His Person, in His essence, the bloom, as it were, and expression of the holiness of God.

The other two names are even more significant and suggestive. He is called both "the Love," and "the Gift". He is called the Love, because He proceeds from the Father and the Son through love. This name belongs to Him by reason of His origin and personality. He is the Person of love. With this name is connected the other of "Gift," or pledge. Perfect, active love expresses itself by giving and communicating, as it were, a pledge of itself. A gift is always the expression and the result of love. Such in the Blessed Trinity is the Holy Ghost. He is the outflow, the product of the love of the Father and the Son. Through love and by love they give their nature to the Holy Ghost, breathing Him forth and possessing Him as the pledge of their mutual love. He is, therefore, by reason of His origin and personality, a "gift" and "pledge," and is consequently the Prototype, the Source and Author of all gifts and is Himself the highest Gift of God to creatures.

Such, then, are the names of the Holy Ghost, and such is His Personality, which distinguishes Him from the Father and the Son. The Father proceeds from no Person; the Son goes forth from the Father by way of knowledge; and the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and the Son by the breath of love. Thus, as the Father is the Person who has no origin, and the Son is the Personal Wisdom, so is the Holy Ghost the Person of Love.

3. What follows from this? I ask you in return: What follows on love? What does love do? What corresponds with love? and I reply: Love alone. The Holy Ghost proceeds from love and by love;

love is His essence. He is the Person of Love. No other, therefore, of the three Divine Persons is in the same way Love as He, uncreated, infinite love, its sweet breath, its inexpressible sigh and effusion, I might almost say the infinite pulsation of Divine Love. If He be the Love, then is He also the Kindness, the Benevolence, the Goodness of God, both in Himself and towards the creature. He is the flame of love which sends down the rays of divine love on the kingdom of creation, penetrating and illuminating, warming and enkindling, enriching and glorifying it with the treasures of His gifts. For He is the Principle, the Author, the Medium of all gifts and benefits which are bestowed by God upon His creatures. If the Holy Ghost be love, then is He also peace, rest and joy; for peace and joy are the fruits of love. Then also is He delight, sweetness and beatitude; for love is all that.

Oh, if we had only a conception of the sweetness and delights of the Holy Ghost! Tell me, have you never in your life tasted a sweet consolation? Do you not remember how well it was with you when, while contemplating your many sins, you experienced a heartfelt contrition, when your heart was melted and you were able to weep while the words of absolution were pronounced over you, and how moved you were, and how you trembled with emotion when you received the kiss of reconciliation? Do you not remember how at times, when you knelt in prayer, a heavenly consolation and delight inundated your heart, so that the hours passed like minutes? You would not have foregone those moments for all the joys of this world, for they were like a foretaste of heaven. Now, what caused all this? In a word, the Holy Ghost, or, rather, one of His acts, which was like a little wavelet from the ocean of His love beating against your heart. It

was but a glimpse of His infinite beauty, and what entranced you was only a touch which He gave you as He passed by, a gentle kiss which He imprinted on you as a token of His love. If the effect on a vessel of clay like your heart could be so ravishing, what must be the delights of heaven, where with irresistible impetuosity He pours out His sweetness in all its fullness on the blessed? What must the Holy Ghost be in Himself! What must the Heart of God be with its riches, its goodness, its beatitude! If one of the Divine Persons possessed the Heart of God, and if He Himself were the Heart of God, how could His amiability and beauty be described! This can in a certain sense be said of the Holy Ghost. None of the Divine Persons, so to speak, possesses the Heart of God so intimately as the Holy Ghost. When we consider all this, we cannot but ask ourselves whether there is in the Blessed Trinity a Person more lovable than the Holy Ghost. Is He not the bloom, the fragrantcy, the sweetness of the Godhead?

This, therefore, is what we have called the Countenance of the Holy Ghost, the Countenance of the eternal, infinite Love! And what do we owe Him in return but love? We love all that we love on earth because it has caught a ray of His beauty. He is all the love, all the good, all the sweetness, all the delight which we admire in creatures—He is that and infinitely more. If His name demands our adoration, His sweetness demands the offering of our love. Love is the most beautiful way of serving God, and the most worthy homage which we can offer Him. Let us then love the Holy Ghost with all our hearts. If we had a thousand hearts, and they were all consumed before Him in the ardour of His love, it would not be an adequate offering wherewith to do honour to His Person. To what is the human heart more susceptible than to love? For what does it yearn,

for what does it seek more zealously than happiness? Now it is precisely these two—love and happiness—which are the peculiar attributes of the Person of the Holy Ghost. Does he not draw all rational creatures to Him, as by a spiritual magnet, and embrace them, as it were, in a magic circle from which they cannot escape? Think what allurements, what attractions there are in the glance of even earthly love; and how should not the glance of the Spirit of eternal and infinite Love be strong enough to draw our hearts to Him?

CHAPTER III.

IN THE HEART OF THE GODHEAD.

THE Holy Ghost is God: He is a Person of the Holy Trinity: the Person of love. That is His nature and personality, and as such He has not life only in Himself, but has it in the closest relation to the Father and the Son. This relation, which we now wish to contemplate, is twofold: (1) the relation of the Father and the Son to the Holy Ghost; (2) the relation of the Holy Ghost to the Father and Son.

1. The relation of the Father and the Son to the Holy Ghost is in itself twofold: They give Him His origin; and, ever remaining with Him in the most intimate union, They honour and glorify Him as They do themselves.

In the last meditation we saw—though only superficially—that the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and the Son. This truth must be particularly insisted on, because of the hostility with which it met from the Greeks. They contended that the Holy Ghost proceeds only from the Father, and not from the Son, and opposed the insertion of the word *Filioque* ("and from the Son") in the Nicene Creed, the addition having been accepted by the Western Church. Their assertion was an error. It is an explicit article of faith that the Holy Ghost proceeds from both the Father and the Son, as from one and the same principle. The doctrine is contained in Holy Scripture. Our Lord, in His farewell discourse, wherein He promised to send the Holy Ghost to

help His Apostles, says not merely that the Father would send the Holy Spirit in His name, but that "*He* would send Him from the Father".¹ Thus He was sent by both together. According to the mind of the Church, no one Divine Person can send another, unless the One sent owes His origin to the Sender. This external and temporal Mission is, therefore, always connected with the inner and eternal Procession, being at the same time its manifestation. If, therefore, the Son sends the Holy Ghost in time, it follows that the Spirit owes His origin to Him in eternity. Further, our Lord says that the Holy Ghost shall receive of His and shall show it to the Apostles.² Now, by reason of His independent and infinite perfection, no one Divine Person can receive anything from another except the one indivisible divine nature, received by procession; otherwise that Person would not be the equal of the others in power and perfection—in other words, He would not be God. If, therefore, the Son gives anything to the Holy Ghost, it must be His origin, and, consequently, He proceeds from the Son. Finally, speaking of Himself, our Lord says solemnly: "All things that the Father hath, are Mine".³ The word "all" signifies not only the outward power and glory, but also those which are interior, with, consequently, the perfect possession of the divine nature, and the power to communicate it to another Person. There is no contradiction in the Son communicating the divine nature to another Person; but it would be absurd to say that He communicated it to the Father, for no one can be the father of his father. How often in Holy Scripture do we find the Holy Ghost called, in one place, the Spirit,⁴ in another the Promise of the Father,⁵ or, again, the Spirit of the Son,⁶ the

¹ John xv. 26.² John xvi. 14.³ John xvi. 15.⁴ Matt. x. 20.⁵ Acts i. 4.⁶ Gal. iv. 6.

Spirit of Christ,¹ or the Spirit of Jesus.² What could these terms signify if the Spirit did not proceed from the Son as well as from the Father?

Such, incontestably, is the doctrine of the Fathers of the Church. Among the holy Doctors of the West there is not even one dissentient voice; and they understand and interpret the words of Scripture which have been quoted in the sense which has been given above. The doctrine of the older Greek Fathers is the same. According to them the Father gives the divine nature to the Son, and the Son gives it to the Holy Ghost;³ Jesus Christ is therefore God, because He not only gives the Holy Ghost, but because the Holy Ghost proceeds from Him; and the Holy Ghost is God because He proceeds from the Father and the Son, and has therefore the same nature as They.⁴ The Son is the principle of the Holy Ghost, and the Holy Ghost, on the other hand, belongs to the Son, is the breath, the fragrance, the image,⁵ the word,⁶ and the perfect likeness of the Son.⁷ In all these terms the same idea recurs: the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Son even as the Son proceeds from the Father. These affirmations are all the more valuable because the later Greeks, in opposition to the older tradition, denied them.

This doctrine rests on the certain and incontestable truth that in the three Divine Persons there is no difference except in the mode of Their origin; and that we can and must ascribe to each Person all that is not in contradiction with His own personal attributes. Thus, if there is no internal contradiction in

¹ Rom. viii. 9.

² Acts xvi. 7.

³ St. Cyrill. Hieros., *Catech.*, xvi., n. 24.

⁴ St. Cyrill. Alex., *Thesaur. Assert.*, 34.

⁵ St. Athanas., *De Trinit. et Spir. S.*, n. 19; *Ad Serapion*, i., 24 sq.

iii., 3.

⁶ St. Basil., *Adv. Eunom.*, lib. 5.

⁷ St. Cyrill. Alex., *De SS. Trinit. Dial.*, vii.

the procession of another Person from the Son as well as from the Father as from one principle, this power must be conceded to the Son. Such is the case here. The Son, begotten by understanding, has, in order though not in time or rank, precedence of the Holy Ghost, who proceeds from the will and love. Therefore the Son, being in possession of the divine essence and the divine will, can, with the Father, breathe forth the Holy Ghost; and not only can He do so, but it is of necessity that He should, otherwise not only would the Father be more than the Son, but there would not be sufficient distinction between the Son and the Holy Ghost, for both would proceed from the Father alone. By this doctrine the greatest unity and all distinction possible is most beautifully maintained in the Blessed Trinity. It may be as well to observe that it is not from the Son as Son—as known to the Father and begotten by understanding—that the Holy Ghost proceeds; but it is as loved and through love that the Son, who possesses this love together with the Father, breathes forth the Holy Spirit. This truth has been laid down incontestably by the declarations of three great Councils of the Church: the Fourth Council of the Lateran (1215), the Second Council of Lyons (1274), and the Council of Florence (1439), at which the Greeks solemnly abjured their error, and by accepting the *Filioque* acknowledged the procession of the Holy Ghost from the Son.

The last two Councils did not content themselves with defining the Procession of the Holy Ghost from the Father and the Son, but also defined that He proceeds from both as from *one principle*. This does not mean only that both Divine Persons have an equal share in the Procession of the Holy Ghost, but that the activity of both is one and the same thing. Father and Son together are *one* principle of the Holy

Ghost. He does not proceed from Them in so far as They are distinct from each other, but in so far as They are one, in possession of the same divine will, or the same love, by which They breathe forth the Holy Spirit. Even as the word "God" betokens only the divine nature, and does not determine whether One, or Two, or Three possess that divine nature; so the word "principle" betokens only the activity which produces the Holy Ghost, and does not determine whether that activity belongs to one Person or two. Thus, the three Divine Persons create the universe by one act, and are in truth one Creator, although it is the act of three. This idea is taken from St. Augustine.¹ St. Anselm explains the same truth by a simile. The sea, says he, proceeds both from the water of the river and the water of its source, and from both at once; for the water which constitutes it is common to both.²

This, therefore, is the first thing to be noticed: The Holy Ghost proceeds from the substance of the Father and the Son in unity of principle. He has the same nature as They. He is God as They are; and from this it follows further, that the Father and Son honour the Holy Ghost as God, and that They love and glorify Him as They love and glorify themselves; or, rather, that They love themselves in Him. Who can grasp this intimate union, the ardour of the love and joy with which the Divine Persons eternally breathe Him forth, giving Him the one to the other as the pledge of Their mutual love! All the light, the ardour, the joy, the love which everywhere lives, works and glows in creation is nothing but a faint reflection of the eternal procession of the Holy Ghost from divine and infinite love. But the esteem and love of the Father and Son for the Holy Ghost does not remain hidden in the secret of the Godhead, for

¹ *De Trin.*, v., 14.

² *De Processione Spir. S.*, c. 17.

it is revealed in time in the manifestations and missions of the Holy Ghost. As we shall see farther on, the Father and the Son send the Holy Ghost; and His Mission concerns all that is most important for the salvation of the world. They leave to Him the chiefest part of their work for man, making known in a striking and glorious way both His nature as God and His relation to Themselves, turning the hearts of creatures to Him with love and devotion. The remainder of these meditations will show us how the Father and Son are for ever proclaiming the supremacy of the Holy Ghost, and glorifying Him as God.

“But,” you may say, “what is the good to me of these sublime truths, these incomprehensible mysteries?” I will answer you: It is fitting and right that we should know all that faith teaches us about the Person of the Holy Ghost. If God has had the condescension and goodness to incline Himself towards us, and reveal to us something of His unsearchable secrets, surely it is right that we should try to consider it, and understand it. That God should allow us a glimpse of the hidden things of His Godhead shows us that He does not regard and treat us as servants, who know nothing of what goes on in the bosom of the family, but as children and friends, from whom, as our Lord so beautifully says, He has no secrets. “I will not now call you servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doth. But I have called you friends: because all things whatsoever I have heard of My Father, I have made known to you.”¹ Should not we love God more for His condescension to us, for meeting us with His fatherly love, and showing us even here below by faith that glory which, unveiled, will be our beatitude in heaven? Let us then thank God,

¹ John xv. 15.

and accept with joy whatever knowledge of Himself He has the goodness to communicate to us.

In what we have said above we have, moreover, quite a new and urgent incentive to love and honour the Holy Ghost with our whole hearts; because such devotion does not take from that which we offer to the Father and the Son. Perhaps you think that a special devotion to the Holy Ghost might draw you away from what you owe to the Father and the Son; and that this ought not to be. But it does nothing of the kind. Your devotion to the Holy Ghost is pleasing to the Father and the Son, and They desire it, because They themselves love the Holy Ghost above everything. We have seen how They breathe Him forth together, and how He is the fruit and expression of Their mutual love, and how They are and ever remain one in Him. The Holy Ghost is the "Spirit of the Father," and the "Spirit of Jesus". If we love the Father and Son we must also love the Holy Ghost. It is They whom we love in Him and with Him. Devotion to the Holy Ghost does not separate us from the Father and the Son; on the contrary, it binds our hearts to Them and obtains Their love for us. Our Lord says: "The Father loveth you: because you have loved Me";¹ and we can apply the same words to the Holy Ghost. The Father and the Son will love us if we love the Holy Ghost. By loving Him we do the very thing that They have done from all eternity, and follow Their example. Were we to love Him with the most ardent affection which it is possible to conceive, would our love approach to Theirs? No, Their love is simply infinite. Let us then love the Holy Ghost because the Father and the Son love Him, and because both They and the Holy Ghost will love us in return.

2. Let us now briefly examine the relation of the

¹ John xvi. 27.

Holy Ghost to the Father and Son. What, in the heart of the Godhead, is He to Them? Who can tell us? Whence shall we learn it? I think we can learn it from the truths which we have already contemplated; and need only draw one conclusion from them. The Holy Ghost proceeds, as we have seen, from the Father and the Son by the will, or love: He is the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity—the Person of love. Therefore the following relation to the two other Persons exists: He is, first, Their complement, secondly, Their joy and delight, and, thirdly, Their crown and termination. Such is the Holy Ghost in the inner life of the Blessed Trinity.

In the Holy Ghost the life of the Godhead receives its complement. The Son, it is true, is the fruit of this inner life by being expression of the knowledge of the Father. But this does not suffice. The will, or love, of God must also have its personal expression; and such is the Holy Ghost, the Person of love. He proceeds from love, from the love of the two other Persons, namely, from the mutual love of the Father and Son, and therewith completes the inner life of the Godhead.

Again, the Holy Ghost is the joy in the Blessed Trinity. He is, as we have seen, the expression of the mutual love of the Father and Son. He is the Person of love, and therefore the substantial and personal expression of the joy and delight which the Father and Son take in Their own beauty and excellence. The Fathers of the Church make use of the most tender and moving expressions to describe the Holy Ghost, as considered from this point of view. They call Him the delight, the happiness of the Most Holy Trinity, the sweetness of the Begetter and the Begotten;¹ the oil of gladness;² the sweet fragrance

¹ St. Aug., *De Trin.*, lib. 6, c. 10.

² St. Ambros., *De Spir. S.*, lib. 1, c. 9.

and image of the Son;¹ the embrace² and the joy and delight of the Father and Son, the inexpressible sigh of the Godhead. If this be true, may we not say that the life of the Godhead, inasmuch as it finds expression in the Persons of the Father and Son, would be indeed sublime and majestic, but that without the Holy Ghost it would be wanting in attractiveness, cordiality and delight. For there is no true and perfect beatitude without joy.

Finally, the Holy Ghost is the completion of the inner life of the Godhead, because there is no fourth Person in the Blessed Trinity. Thus, the divine life poured forth, as it were, on the Holy Ghost by the Father and Son, returns by Him to Them in streams of love and joy, uniting Them for ever in that love which is Their eternal beatitude. In this sense the Holy Ghost is often called by the Fathers the indissoluble bond,³ the unity of the Father and Son,⁴ and, consequently, the unalterable peace and rest of the Holy Trinity,⁵ because by Him its happiness and perfection is complete. St. Jerome is, therefore, quite right in affirming that without the Holy Ghost the Blessed Trinity would be imperfect.⁶ But through Him and in Him it acquires infinite richness, perfect beauty, and simplicity with manifoldness of life. The Father is the expression of eternity, sublimity, majesty and independence of all principle; the Son is beauty and wisdom, and the Holy Ghost is goodness, sweetness, joy and happiness. The Father is the principle of the Son and Holy Ghost, and binds Them together in unity, but not in the same way: He begets the Son by way of knowledge, and together

¹ St. Athanas., *Ad Serap.*, iii., n. 3.

² St. Bern., *Hom. 8 in Cantic.*

³ St. Bern., *Hom. 1 in Oct. Pasch.*

⁴ Agobard., *Serm.* "Exhort ad Plebem de Fidei Veritate".

⁵ St. Bern., *Serm. 8 in Cantic.*, n. 2.

⁶ *Ad Hedib.*, cp. 120, c. 9.

with the Son breathes forth the Spirit by way of love. The Son is not the principle of two Persons, but, with the Father, breathes forth the Holy Ghost; and being, on the one hand, begotten of the Father, and, on the other, breathing forth the Holy Spirit, He unites both the other Persons in Himself. Finally, the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father, but not in the same way as the Son; He proceeds from the Father and Son as from one principle, and so unites Them, and seals Their unity in His Person. Thus, each Person is distinct and complete in Himself, without His unity with the others being disturbed; on the contrary each Person is by His personal attributes both the centre and connecting link of Himself and of the other two Persons. What a wonderful world of living unity, what motion in quietude, what fruitful self-sufficingness, what simplicity in multiplicity! ¹ And it is the Holy Ghost with His beauty and sweetness who is, so to speak, the shore of this ocean of power, wisdom, majesty, goodness and beatitude.

Such is the relation of the Holy Ghost to the two other Divine Persons. He owes His origin to Them; He is Personal love in the heart of the Father and Son; He is the joy, the glory, the delight and the sweetness of the divine life; and it is He who administers the streams which flow from the goodness of God, and directs them where He will, as St. Bernard so beautifully says: "The Holy Ghost is the goodness of God, and the ruler of the heart of the Father". ² What can be more lovely than the Holy Ghost? Let us not forget that the vision and possession of this mystery of the Most Holy Trinity will some day be our reward and happiness in heaven. What the Holy Ghost is in the Blessed Trinity, that will He be in our hearts—the source of love and joy.

¹ Scheeben, *Mysterien des Christenthums*, 2 Hauptst., § 19.

² St. Bern., *Hom. 1 in Pentec.*

The same stream of sweetness and delight which now, by Him, fills the Godhead, will inundate our hearts also, satisfy their desires, and fill their depths with love and delight. St. Augustine says: "The Holy Ghost unites the Father and Son, and draws us into union with Them".¹ Therefore is it fitting that we should now by faith, love and holy desire raise our hearts to taste this joy here below, as a foretaste in spirit of the joys of heaven.

¹ *De Trin.*, lib. 7, c. 6.

CHAPTER IV.

THE GATES OF EGRESS.

TILL now we have been contemplating the inner and personal excellence of the Holy Ghost, and His glory in the bosom of the Most Holy Trinity. We have studied His invisible kingdom—a kingdom of unutterable majesty, loveliness and beatitude, possessed by Him in union with the two other Divine Persons. But God—and consequently the Holy Ghost—possesses also another kingdom of glory, exterior and visible—a kingdom outside Himself, which we can see and perceive, namely, creation in all its greatness, variety and beauty. Creation is the communication, or, as it were, the overflowing of the divine life on to the creature, by which it becomes an indescribable reflection of God. It follows that, being the work of God, creation represents God, not only in His essence and nature, as a perfect, personal and infinitely powerful Being, but as He is, one God in Three Persons. Creation can, therefore, represent and reveal God both naturally and supernaturally, just as a child can represent and reproduce his father and mother, not only generally by reason of his human nature, but even in their personal characteristics of feature and dispositions of mind and heart. In like manner creation can be a reflection of the Holy Trinity, and this in a twofold way: first, because we ourselves consider it as having special relation to one or other of the Divine Persons; and, secondly, because the Divine Persons enter into

union with creatures, and express and imprint on them Their personal attributes.

The first way consists in this, that we ascribe an operation of God which is common to the Three Persons to one Person in particular, as if it were due to Him alone. We do this because, knowing by faith the personal attributes of each of the Divine Persons, we recognise in this or that divine operation a special relation to the personal attributes of one of the Divine Persons, to whom we therefore ascribe that operation. Thus, for instance, we say that the Holy Ghost sanctifies us, because, as we have seen, He is in an especial manner the Person of sanctity. On this account we ascribe this operation to Him, though, as a matter of fact, we do not deny that it belongs also to the other two Persons. But we must never forget that all exterior operations, in so far as they are divine, are common to the Three Divine Persons, and belong equally to all.

The other way in which the creature can be an image of the Holy Trinity or of one of the Divine Persons has its origin not in us, but in God, and is therefore more real. It consists in this, that the life communicated by God to the creature gives it a likeness to Him whereby it is made into His image. Even in the natural order man is an image of God by reason of his spiritual soul, and the powers of understanding and free-will with which it is gifted. But it is especially in the supernatural order, and in a far higher and more perfect way, that the interior life of God is communicated by what is called the Sending, or Mission, of a Divine Person. These Missions are the eternal procession of the Divine Persons symbolically shown and represented in the creature by supernatural operation. The hidden life of the Holy Trinity consists, as we have seen, in the intercommunication of the divine nature between the different

Persons; and the relation of the Divine Persons to each other is, by virtue of these hidden communications, and according to their type, expressed by divine operation in the creature, who thus becomes a living image of the Blessed Trinity, and acquires a relation to each Divine Person which he had not before. The end of these Missions is to manifest and by imitation to communicate the relations of the Divine Persons. In fact, as faith teaches us, these Missions agree with the origin and procession of the Divine Persons. Only two Persons are sent, the Son and the Holy Ghost. The Son is sent by the Father, not by the Holy Ghost, but the Holy Ghost is sent by the Father and the Son, following the order of the divine processions. The Father is not sent, because He does not proceed from another Person; the Son is sent by the Father only, because He proceeds from Him alone; the Holy Ghost is sent by the Father and the Son, because He owes His origin to both. These Missions are, therefore, true revelations of the Most Holy Trinity, not through words, but by operation and imitation, by means of which we become not only images of the Blessed Trinity, but enter into a relation with the Divine Persons analogous to that which exists between Themselves. We cannot doubt the reality of these Missions. Scripture and the Fathers establish them incontrovertibly. They call these Missions the "coming to us," the "dwelling with us" of the Divine Persons. Our Lord speaks thus in the Gospel of St. John: "I will manifest Myself to him. . . . We will come to him, and make our abode with him.¹ . . . That they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee: that they also may be one in Us."²

This coming of the Divine Persons takes place in a twofold manner: in an exterior and visible manner,

¹ John xiv. 21, 23.

² John xvii. 21.

accompanied by signs that this Person or that Person is sent, this manner being called the visible Mission. There is also an invisible coming by means of the work of grace in the soul, which in a certain sense communicates the Divine Person to the soul. The dove at the Baptism of Christ, and the tongues of fire at Pentecost are examples of the first manner, though it must be borne in mind that these outward and sensible signs do not actually contain either the Divine Person sent or His gift, being only their accompaniment. The second—the invisible and spiritual Mission—consists in the communication of a gift or grace analogous to the characteristic attributes of the Divine Person who is sent, and, in a certain sense, given to the soul. By the communication of this gift the eternal procession of that Divine Person in the bosom of the Godhead is imaged and, so to speak, accomplished in us. The object of God in these Missions is not only the revelation of Himself by the gift; but He desires further that we should make use of it, so as to become capable thereby of participation in the divine life, and enjoy the glory and delight of having as our Guest the Divine Person sent to us. We have an example of such a supernatural Mission of a Divine Person in the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity was really given to the human nature of our Redeemer, and was substantially united to it. The communication of sanctifying grace and supernatural gifts constitutes another Mission. We shall see in the course of these meditations how far it is true that the Holy Ghost is given by a Mission of this sort.

These Missions are, therefore, as it were, the beautiful gate through which the Holy Ghost goes forth from the glorious divine life, and, in His fulness, flows over to the creature, filling and penetrating it,

revealing Himself to it, and transforming the whole of creation into a vast and glorious kingdom of His own. We have now to contemplate this exterior kingdom of the Holy Ghost; for this chapter is only an introduction to it, and the transition from the inner life of the Holy Ghost to His exterior life in creation.

CHAPTER V.

THE GOD-MAN.

THE first Being on whom the eye of the Holy Ghost rested with love, when He found Him, so to speak, in the bosom of God, whom He therefore loaded with gifts without measure and without number, making Him the centre, the ideal, the masterpiece of creation, was the God-man, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

There are three points which may be considered in connection with this our Saviour: (1) Who is the Saviour? (2) What did He owe to the Holy Ghost? (3) How did he respond to the love of the Holy Ghost?

1. Who, then, is our Saviour, the God-Man? He is the only-begotten Son of the Father, begotten from all eternity, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, who, in time, took from Mary the Ever-Blessed Virgin our human nature, raising it to a hypostatic union with Himself. The human nature of Christ has no personality except that of the Son of God. Thus there are in Him two different natures, the divine and the human, but only one Divine Person, who unites the two natures in Himself. When, therefore, we say that Jesus Christ is the work of the Holy Ghost, or that He receives something from Him, this applies only to His human nature, not to His Person who could receive nothing from the Third Person. We have seen how, on the contrary, the Holy Ghost

receives the divine nature from the Son, in that He proceeds from Him.

But precisely because Christ is the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity and equal with the Holy Ghost, there was due to Him a measure of love and gifts such as no other being could receive. We can indeed form no idea of the greatness and glory of the Incarnate God. By reason of His eternal predestination as the Son of God, He is the centre, the prototype, the first beginning and last end of all creatures. He unites in Himself all the orders of creation—of nature, grace and glory—and all the dignities, privileges and prerogatives of all beings put together. Everything was made after Him and for Him. Whatever God has, in His love, determined to give us, that does He give us in Christ, through Christ and for the sake of Christ. He is the way of God to us, and through Him all the gifts of the Holy Ghost come to creatures. He is the Head and Centre of that creation which, in its various degrees, is nothing but the court of God made Man.

2. But, however great Christ may be, He is, according to His human nature, the work of the Holy Ghost. We may distinguish three things in God made Man : (a) His being ; (b) His work ; (c) the results of His work.

(a) By His being we are to understand the creation and endowment of His human nature, and its union with the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. The creation of the human nature of Christ and its union with the Person of the Son of God is indeed one of those operations attributable equally to all the Divine Persons ; but it is to be especially ascribed to the Holy Ghost, because to Him belong all the works of vivification, sanctification, perfection and grace. The Incarnation—namely, the creation of the Sacred Humanity of our Lord and His union with the

Second Person of the Holy Trinity—was at once the basis, the beginning, the ideal and the zenith of all natural and supernatural perfection, of all sanctification and grace, and of all the works of the love of God, and is therefore to be ascribed in an especial manner to the Holy Ghost. Therefore, when the Angel said to Mary: “The Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God,” he added: “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee”.¹ And in the Creed it is plainly said that He was “conceived of the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary”. From the first moment of His conception the Incarnate God was not only endowed with all the prerogatives and graces of soul and body due to Him, but also with an astounding fulness of grace and holiness, and with an indwelling power, as Head, of communicating these graces of sanctification to His members. In order to endow this wondrous Being fittingly all the riches of nature and grace were exhausted; and whereas we receive grace for grace only in a certain measure, to Him the fulness of grace and holiness was communicated.²

Indeed, how shall we express what Christ is? Oh, what a wondrous Being! What sublimity, what majesty, what sweetness, what beauty and attractiveness in His outward appearance! What a noble and sublime understanding! What a character, what a heart! All this, enhanced by the splendour of pre-eminent grace and holiness and the most marvellous virtues, by supernatural powers of working miracles, and, finally, by the glory of the divinity, constitutes a Being so transcendent, that we not only love and revere Him, but we can, dare and must worship Him. The sum of these magnificent properties which Scripture calls the “unction of Christ,” to

¹ Luke i. 35.

² John i. 16; iii. 34.

whom does He owe it? Who made our Lord so wondrous and beautiful? The prophet answers: "There shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse, and a flower shall rise up out of his root. And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him: the spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the spirit of counsel and of fortitude, the spirit of knowledge and of godliness. And he shall be filled with the spirit of the fear of the Lord."¹ The glory of the God-Man is, therefore, a reflection of the Holy Ghost, an effect of His love for Jesus Christ. The adorable Heart of God made Man is the work of the Holy Ghost.

(b) Thus endowed, the Redeemer entered upon His Mission, which was no other than to glorify God by the redemption and salvation of the world, through His example, teaching, miracles and atoning death. All this, comprising the prophetic, priestly and pastoral offices, was fulfilled by God made Man under the guidance of the Holy Ghost. The stress laid on this by Holy Scripture is remarkable. In the Gospels we see the Holy Spirit introducing the Divine Redeemer to the ministry of His public life by resting visibly on Him when He was baptised in the Jordan, thus consecrating Him, as it were, to His office, and testifying to Him in the presence of John and the people.² It had been told to John that He was the Messiah on whom he would see the Spirit descend.³ The Spirit led our Lord into the desert, across the Jordan, there to make ready for His public life by prayer, penance and victory over the spirit of evil. Nearly all the evangelists, and especially St. Luke, make explicit mention of the share of the Holy Ghost in this part of our Lord's work. "And Jesus, being full of the Holy Ghost, returned from the Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the desert."⁴

¹ Isa. xi. 1, etc.

² Matt. iii. 16; Mark i. 10; Luke iii. 22.

³ John i. 33.

⁴ Luke iv. 1; Matt. iv. 1; Mark i. 12.

It is always the same Spirit who led and guided Him in His many journeys and undertakings. "And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee."¹ He it was who spake through Him in His discourses, notably in that delivered by Him in the synagogue at Nazareth, where our Lord was inspired to read the passage of Scripture in which the Messiah is praised as the glorious instrument of the Holy Spirit.² The miracles by which our Lord manifested and proved His divinity were, according to the Scriptures, witnesses and works of the Holy Ghost. Jesus Himself testified that He worked His miracles by "the finger of God," and by "the Spirit of God"; and He condemns antagonism to these miracles as a sin against the Holy Ghost.³ It is the Holy Ghost who consoles Him and fills Him with joy in the many trials of His apostolate.⁴ Finally, the Holy Ghost co-operated to make the satisfaction offered by our Lord pleasing to God, and to give atoning power to His Sacrifice on the Cross. Therefore St. Paul says: "If the blood of oxen sanctify such as are defiled, how much more the Blood of Christ, who by the Holy Ghost offered Himself unspotted unto God".⁵ The obedience and the self-sacrificing love which the Holy Ghost kindled in the Heart of the Redeemer were, so to speak, the fire which consumed His offering. Consequently, from beginning to end the Holy Ghost concurred with our Lord to accomplish His work. The powers, the offices, the dignities which belonged to Christ during His earthly life were all of the Holy Ghost. St. Peter summarises the whole work of the Redeemer in these words: "You know the word which hath been published through all Judea, Jesus of Nazareth: how God anointed Him with the Holy Ghost, and with power,

¹ Luke iv. 14.² Luke iv. 18.³ Matt. xii. 28; Luke xi. 20.⁴ Luke x. 21.⁵ Heb. ix. 13, 14.

who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him." ¹

(c) By the results of the Incarnation we are to understand that glorious kingdom, the Church, which our Lord won for Himself, in which, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, He is worshipped and glorified. But the Church is, as we shall see farther on, altogether the kingdom of the Holy Ghost. All the honour which is paid to God made Man by the faith and love of believers is the operation of the Holy Ghost, as our Lord Himself says: "He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it to you. . . . He shall glorify Me. . . . He will convince the world of sin, and of justice, and of judgment: of sin because they believed not in Me; and of justice because I go to the Father, . . . and of judgment because the prince of this world is already judged." ² "He shall give testimony of Me." ³ Scripture also says that "the testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy".⁴ Thus, it is not only by His existence and origin, by His procession from the Son as Supreme Goodness, that the Holy Ghost bears testimony to God Incarnate; but He also testifies to Him by His operations. He is ever working to sanctify souls, thereby to give them to Christ for His own, and to increase the Church, the Mystical Body of the Incarnate God. Nor did the Holy Ghost wait till Pentecost to give testimony to Christ and glorify Him. Immediately after our Lord's conception the Holy Spirit enlightened St. Elizabeth and enabled her to recognise the Messiah.⁵ It is expressly said of Simeon and Anna that they were filled with the Holy Ghost, and went to the Temple at His call, there to meet the Messiah and proclaim His coming.⁶ To John the Baptist there was given, as we have seen, a sign whereby he

¹ Acts x. 37, 38.

² John xvi. 8-11, 14.

³ John xv. 26.

⁴ Apoc. xix. 10.

⁵ Luke i. 41.

⁶ Luke ii. 26.

should know the Saviour.¹ More than this, the Church is foreshadowed even in the first days of creation. The whole of the Old Testament is a type of the Church, and is therefore a first and splendid endeavour of the Holy Ghost to glorify our Lord, in the same way that the Church triumphant, the kingdom of heaven, is the crown and completion of His work. This operation of the Holy Ghost, relating to the Person of Christ and His Mystical Body—a work which embraces all orders of creation, all ages and all nations, all time and eternity—is the most noble response of love. In fact, the whole history of the Church and the world is one glorious canticle of praise, one everlasting outburst of the love of the Holy Ghost for the Father and the Son, from whom He proceeds.

3. It will now be instructive and convenient to try to see how the Sacred Humanity of Jesus responds to the love of the Holy Ghost, by acknowledging and glorifying Him both outwardly and inwardly. The Holy Ghost is love, and it is His delight to dwell in the hearts of His creatures; but never did He find or possess a more pure, holy or pleasant dwelling-place than the Sacred Heart of Jesus. No other could compare with it in the richness and excellence of its gifts, or in its ineffable and personal union with God, by which this Sacred Heart is of equal dignity with and most properly fitted for the Holy Ghost. It was, so to speak, a second bosom of the Godhead for the Holy Ghost to dwell in. Thus, then, the Incarnate God by His very nature and being glorifies the Person of the Holy Ghost, for from Him, according to His human nature, He received all. Nowhere has the Holy Ghost been so unceasingly worshipped, loved and glorified, nowhere have the truth and reality of the eternal love of the Father and the Son been so re-

¹ John i. 33.

flected and realised as in the Sacred Heart. Nowhere else has the Holy Ghost found such understanding, such susceptibility, such sympathy, such docility to His slightest impulse or movement. The Heart and Soul of God made Man were like a pure mirror, or like the surface of a lake which responded to every breath of the Spirit. It was like a wondrous stringed instrument which reproduced the notes played on it by the Finger of God—the Holy Ghost—in all their power, sweetness and incomparable beauty. There alone, in the Heart of Jesus, was the Holy Ghost absolute Lord and Master; for, as we have already seen, it followed the guidance of the Holy Spirit in everything. But what rendered the Heart of Jesus so completely an object of the Divine Spirit's complacency was that it contained in itself all the treasures of His grace and love, and was a living ideal of them; and because He could at His will use it as an instrument of His love for man. Through no one has the Holy Ghost shed His benefits on us so bountifully as He has through the Divine Redeemer. By virtue of all these prerogatives the Sacred Heart of Jesus was the most glorious temple of the Holy Ghost which can be conceived.

The inner mind of the Incarnate God expressed itself outwardly in word and deed. When He appeared publicly at Nazareth He confessed that He owed to the Holy Ghost all that His human nature possessed of gifts and prerogatives; and He furthermore testified in His discourses—especially in His farewell discourse after the Last Supper—to the divinity of the Holy Ghost, to His Procession from the Father and Himself, and to His Mission and operation in the Church.¹ Never before had the majesty of the Holy Ghost been proclaimed so clearly and distinctly. "Whosoever shall speak a word against the

¹ John xiv. 15, 16, 17. See chap. xlviii.

Son of man," said our Lord, "it shall be forgiven him; but he that shall speak against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him neither in this world nor in the world to come."¹ Why is this? Because the Holy Ghost is love, and because He is the Author of the miracles and prophecies which are the two great and infallible proofs of divine truth. Whoever resists and turns away from Him, sins apparently from malice, by shutting out what could draw him away from sin: consequently for such an one there is, in the ordinary course of things, no salvation. Our Lord has confided the care of the Church to the Holy Ghost. Whilst He, Himself, as it were, fitted together the potential materials of the Church, the Holy Ghost gave life to them. Our Lord bought redemption for us by His merits, but He left the disposal and application of these to the Holy Ghost; and to Him has Christ confided the maintenance, guidance, defence and extension of His Church. In a word, He accomplishes all things in His Church through the Holy Ghost. Can we not see from this what a good understanding there is between the God-Man and the Holy Spirit, and with what deference and distinction our Saviour treats and honours Him? By whom has the Holy Ghost ever been more glorified than by God made Man?

There are, therefore, three weighty reasons why we should love and honour the Holy Ghost. It is He, the Divine Spirit, who endowed the human nature of the Redeemer with its wonderful gifts and graces, and to Him we owe all that our Lord did for us. Oh, how mighty must He be who was able thus to endow a Humanity united to God! Let us consider the innumerable blessings which have come to us through Christ, and ask ourselves what we should have done without Him; and then let us thank the

¹ Matt. xii. 32.

Holy Ghost most fervently, and worship Him in His Gift.

Looking at the other side, we can see how our Lord responded to the generous love of the Holy Ghost, and how it was the concern of His life to manifest and glorify Him, and send Him to us as the sweetest and most glorious fruit of His life and death. The Spirit who dwells in the Sacred Heart of Jesus is none other than the Holy Ghost; and it is the wish of our Lord that we also should make our hearts temples of the Holy Ghost, and should love and honour the Divine Spirit as He Himself always loved and honoured Him. This is, indeed, the dearest desire of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, because He wills that we shall become one with Him as He is one with the Father; but the Holy Ghost is the bond of the Father and the Son. Let us conform ourselves to this wish of our dearest Lord, and pray to Him to come and consecrate our hearts to be everlasting sanctuaries of the Holy Spirit, in which ceaseless worship, praise and love shall be offered to Him for all eternity.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SPOUSE OF THE HOLY GHOST.

JESUS CHRIST, being eternally predestinate as the Son of God, it follows that, by reason of His infinite dignity and excellence, He was—as we have already seen—the first and most eminent of all created beings foreseen and predestinated by God. By the counsel of God He was not to go forth immediately from the hand of the Creator, as had been the case with the first man, but He was to descend from Adam, and be born of an earthly mother. He was to be in truth our Brother, of the same race as we.

Consequently, the divine predestination comprehended necessarily and simultaneously with the Son, His Mother, Mary. Mother and Son are, as it were, interwoven in the divine thought, and together share in quite an incomparable way the predilection of God. Now this predilection is the work of the Holy Ghost; and even as Christ owed to Him all that concerns His human nature, so also was Mary indebted to Him for all her privileges. Therefore let us consider, (1) how the life of the Mother of God was the work of the Holy Ghost; and (2) what conclusions we should draw therefrom.

1. The whole life of the Mother of God resembles that of her Divine Son, just because she is His Mother. In the life of the Incarnate God as in hers we may distinguish three phases: life foreshadowed, actual life and life after death.

Our Saviour was foreshadowed in the Old Testa-

ment. He is its end and object, and everything in it relates to Him and points to Him. So is it with His blessed Mother. Parallel with the prophecies and figures of Christ we find a series of figures and predictions which reveal the greatness and glory of Mary; and so closely are they interwoven that the Church applies to Mary expressions of Scripture referring to the life and operation of the Eternal Wisdom, because, in the thought of God, Son and Mother are inseparable. Thus, even in the garden of paradise, when sentence is pronounced on the serpent, the Mother stands near the Son, and is announced as she who would, through her seed, crush the head of the tempter.¹ When the people of God are in danger of succumbing to their powerful enemies, God comforts and encourages them by the assurance that they shall not be destroyed, because from Israel must spring the Mother of the Messias. "The Lord Himself shall give you a sign," says the prophet Isaias, "Behold a Virgin shall conceive and bear a Son."² And, parallel with the prophecies, we see a magnificent chain of types and figures, such as Jacob's ladder, the burning bush, the rod of Aaron, Gideon's fleece, the Ark of the Covenant, and the famous women of the Old Testament: Eve, Sara, Abisag, Judith, Esther, all of whom owed their greatness to the honour of prefiguring the Mother of God by some virtue, or by some destiny involved in their lives. These figures are the work of the Holy Ghost, because, as we have already said, the Old Testament is a creation of the Spirit, and is, therefore, a striking proof of His love for her who was to be His Spouse. He proclaims her to the world in a thousand ways, and glorifies her by the splendid scenes of the Old Testament. Such is what we have called the life of the Mother of God foreshadowed.

¹ Gen. iii. 15.

² Isa. vii. 14.

Her actual life is the most wonderful combination of the prerogatives of grace and nature, of privileges and dignities; and this she owes to the Holy Ghost. He formed her body in wondrous beauty, grace and dignity; He adorned her mind and heart with rich treasures of knowledge and goodness. Thus even in the natural order the Divine Redeemer had in her a companion, a minister, a mother, worthy of Himself; so much so that He could count it an honour to bear her features. Even greater than these natural gifts were the riches of grace with which she was endowed, and especially the virtues which made of her such a beautiful image of the Holy Ghost. Are not her purity, goodness, love and kindness special marks of this Spirit? And what can we say of her privileges, her Immaculate Conception, her innocence so complete that she never, in the whole course of her life, committed the slightest sin or imperfection, her freedom from any movement of concupiscence, her virginal maternity, her painless death, the assumption of her incorrupt body into heaven? Or, again, what can we say of the continuous stream of extraordinary actual graces poured out upon her soul, her faithful and perfect correspondence with them, and, finally, exterior relations most favourable to her spiritual advancement, especially her long and intimate communion with Christ, the immediate share that she had in the mysteries of His hidden, public, suffering and glorious life? Are not these all unheard-of privileges, in bestowing which the Holy Ghost, the Dispenser of graces, exhausted, so to speak, His love upon Mary, and made her a living image of her Divine Son? Never, except in the case of the Incarnate God, has the Holy Ghost lavished such favours upon a soul!

All this was but a fitting preparation for the dignity of the divine maternity, for which Mary was destined

by the Holy Ghost—a dignity which is the foundation of all her greatness, the peculiar and exclusive character of her being, a dignity which exhausts every conceivable idea of union of a pure creature with God, and of power, honour and glory communicable to it, a dignity which raises her to a real blood relation with God Himself. She was clothed with this dignity at the moment of the Incarnation of Christ. The Incarnation considered as an effect is, according to the explanation given above, in a peculiar manner the work of the Holy Ghost; and through it, therefore, she entered into a special relation to Him, and became—as we so often like to call her—the Spouse of the Holy Ghost. This is not to be understood only in the sense in which it is true of every soul raised to the state of grace that it becomes His spouse, because He communicates Himself to it by grace, and unites Himself to it, thereby making it capable of supernatural works and merit; but we must understand it in the further sense that, by special gratuitous gifts, He made her soul to be the instrument of His operations of a higher order. In the hand of the Holy Ghost Mary became the instrument of the greatest and most glorious work of grace for the salvation of man, that of the Incarnation, which gave her the glory of the divine maternity without injury to her virginity. Thus the life of the Mother of God is the greatest wonder which has ever been wrought in a pure creature; and all its glory is the gift and manifestation of the power and goodness of the Holy Ghost.

Let us now cast a glance at her life after death, by which we are to understand the power and glory which our Lady attained to after her departure from this earth. Her beneficent power, extending to all the world, comes from her divine maternity. Therein lie the principle and reason of all graces bestowed on her, and of the immense merits acquired by her; for

God chose to have her co-operation in the formation of the treasury of the graces which her Son won for man. So likewise did He confide to her the power of distributing them, for as no one co-operated more than she in the forming of this treasury of graces, so has no one a greater claim to dispense them. There are great saints and doctors who affirm that we receive no grace without the co-operation of Mary.¹ Anyhow, it is certain that there is no grace which we cannot obtain through her, and that the greatest and most precious graces flow through her. By whose prayer are more sinners converted than by Mary's. Is it not she who exceeds all saints in readiness and influence to help us in our necessities? Is there any saint who protects the Church with so strong an arm as Mary? And, indeed, why should we wonder that she who exercised a mother's control over the natural body of Christ should have such power over His mystical body? This is why it is said that her intercession is all-powerful. God wills it should be so, and has ordained that we should receive all good things through Mary. Except our Lord, Mary is the most excellent instrument of grace in the hands of the Holy Ghost.

The glory which surrounds Mary is equal to her power. Who shall measure it? Proportionately it is as great as that of her Divine Son. As the Holy Ghost foreshadowed the earthly life of Mary in the Old Testament, so He glorifies the life of Mary after

¹ St. Bern., "Nihil nos Deus habere voluit quod per Mariæ manus non transiret" (*Serm. 3 in vig. Nat. Dom.*; cf. *Serm. "de aquæ ductu"*). St. Bonav., *In Spec.*, c. 3. St. Antoninus, *Summa Theol.*, p. 4, tit. 15, c. 20, § 12. St. Bernardin., *Sen.*, "Nulla gratia venit de cælo ad terram, nisi transeat per manus Mariæ (*Serm. de Nom. Mar.*; cf. *Serm. 61, de superadmir. gratia et gloria B. V. M.*). In the transactions relating to the raising of St. Alphonsus Liguori to the rank of Doctor of the Universal Church the above view is quoted "as the usual one taken by theologians".

death in the Church. We may call the Church the kingdom of the Mother of God. Everywhere are we met by her images and by sanctuaries consecrated to her; and never are there wanting those to venerate her and pray to her. The prayer of praise, petition and thanksgiving ascends ceaselessly like incense to the throne of the Queen of heaven, floating round it like a radiant glory. What vast sums the Church spends every year on the worship of Mary! If we could collect in one place and in one moment of time all that the Church has done in her honour, all the monuments, churches and works of art dedicated to her, and, also, all the hearts which are on fire with love of the Mother of God, what a spectacle would it be, what splendour, what riches, what glory! And who gives all this glory and honour to Mary? Who but the Holy Ghost? He foretold what it would be by the mouth of the blessed one herself: "Behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed";¹ nor is He ever weary of bringing this prophecy to pass. In every age He raises up special servants of the Mother of God, and in every century He stirs up fresh devotions and pious associations, the object of which is to bring her privileges to light, and to spread throughout the world the blessing attached to her veneration. Age after age He inspires the Church to promulgate some dogmatic definition in her honour, or to give some other proof of love. Unceasingly does He incline the hearts of Christians to pour forth torrents of devotion to her.

And the glory of the kingdom which Mary possesses here below, what is it but a faint reflection of the glory, power and bliss she possesses in heaven? The same Spirit operates in the Church triumphant who operates in the Church militant; thus it is true to say that Mary owes to the Holy Ghost all

¹ Luke i. 48.

that she is now, as well as what she was, and what she will be for all eternity. Mary is, as it were, a glorious city of God set on the mount of sanctity, the gates of which the Lord loves above the tabernacles of Jacob. The Holy Ghost Himself has founded and built that glorious city, in which we shall dwell one day in the fulness of rejoicing.¹

2. What conclusions are we to draw from these considerations? First of all let us praise and bless the Holy Ghost for having, of His goodness and by His power, raised a child of man to such honour, and for having endowed her with such unheard-of gifts and graces. Mary is indeed that Jerusalem wherein He who was greater than Solomon dwelt; she is the true temple of God, the ark of the covenant, and the seven-branched candlestick, the light of which, kindled by the Holy Ghost, burns for the glory of God and the happiness of men.

Let us, secondly, thank the Holy Ghost for ourselves. He has loved and blessed us in Mary. It is our Mother whom He has made so great, glorious and bountiful, in order that He might help us more effectually. All that we owe to Mary comes to us through the goodness of the Holy Ghost. Blessed and praised for evermore be that goodness which gave to us a Mother, so holy and lovable that in her, after our Saviour, lie all our hope, consolation and joy.

Then, thirdly, we must not forget how full of devotion, love and gratitude Mary was towards the Holy Ghost. Did she not with all humility and simplicity acknowledge what she owed to Him? She proclaims this most beautifully in the Magnificat.² Did she not, with all love and fidelity, give her heart to the Holy Ghost, following, we may be sure, our Lord's example, who gave Himself over without reserve to

¹ Ps. lxxxvi. 7.

² Luke i. 49.

the guidance of the Divine Spirit, thus to become the instrument of His love and goodness for the salvation of the world. This is the most beautiful and noblest form of worship which can be offered to the Holy Ghost, who wishes nothing more than to make us the instruments of His favours. Let us see how we can become such instruments, and let us offer ourselves to Him by the hand of His beloved Spouse.

Finally, let us, during our preparation for Pentecost, turn our eyes more often to her as she waited for the coming of the Holy Ghost in the Supper Chamber on Mount Sion. We shall learn from the Mother of God how best to profit by this holy season. In connection with this, let us consider three things in Mary. First, no one prepared more carefully for His coming than she did. As before, by her prayers, virtues and ardent desire, she drew the Son of God to her womb, so now was the Holy Ghost drawn down on the Church by the prayers and sighs of the Mother of God. How ceaseless were her prayer and intercession! She well knew the importance of the mystery which was at hand, by which the work of her beloved Son was to be completed and crowned by the Holy Ghost. Thus in a spiritual sense Mary filled the office of Mother at the birth of the Church. Let us thank her from our hearts, and pray to her to intercede for us also. In the second place no one ever received the Holy Ghost in such fulness as she. It is true that the gifts of grace did not appear on her in such an outward manner as they did on the Apostles; but grace was stored up in her in, as we may say, the form of capital of personal holiness; and the gifts and graces she received for others had an exceptional efficacy on the inner life of the Church, which belonged to her as the Mother of God. Thus she could encourage, comfort and even instruct the Apostles. It was she who imparted to them and the Evangelists the mysteries of

the Redeemer's earlier life of which she was the sole witness, and about which she had kept all things in her heart.¹ In the third place, Mary made a more excellent use than any of the graces of Pentecost. Due consideration of these three points will enable us to profit by the holy Feast of Pentecost, and spend it according to the intentions of God for us.

¹ Luke ii. 19.

CHAPTER VII.

THE HOLY ANGELS.

THE first subjects in the Kingdom of Christ and His Mother are the holy Angels. They are, so to speak, the courtiers of God; and the Holy Ghost, being through love the principle of all creations and of all the communications of God to creatures, must reveal Himself to a pre-eminent degree in the holy Angels. St. Gregory Nazianzen says in his discourse on Pentecost: "The Holy Ghost primarily manifests His power in the angelic and heavenly Virtues, which are nearest to God, whose throne they surround".¹ Let us, therefore, now contemplate the excellence of the Angels, (1) in their nature, hierarchies and offices; and (2) in their relation to the Holy Ghost.

1. The Angels are by nature incorporeal and pure spirits, endowed with understanding and free-will. Even in this respect they are superior to us men and to all other material creatures, and are, therefore, a closer image of the spiritual nature of God. Being incorporeal, their understanding is much finer, sharper, deeper and more extensive than ours; and their will is incomparably stronger and more powerful. They have, therefore, a mastery over matter to which we, with all our skill and powers of invention, cannot attain. Indeed, we read in Scripture of a single Angel who with one stroke destroyed the host of Sennacherib.² In fact we cannot form even the faintest

¹ *Orat.* 41, n.^o 11.

² 2 Macc. xv. 22.

idea of the power of the Angels. We may also assume from their excellence that they are equal or superior in number to other creatures, a surmise as fitting to the greatness of their nature as it is to the greatness and wisdom of God. Holy Scripture tells us that Angels innumerable stand before the throne of God.¹

We must now glance at the different orders and ministries of the Angels, for they are not all alike in kind or operation. Even in the court of an earthly king there are countless varieties of places and offices, which present a magnificent spectacle of beauty, power and organisation; and so is it among the Angels. Their orders are distinguished both outwardly by their offices and ministries, and inwardly by the degree of grace and the peculiarity of nature, and especially by their different aptitude for knowledge. It is true that all these blessed spirits see things supernaturally in God, but not all in the same degree; and on this account the Angels are divided into three great hierarchies. Some have their knowledge in great and general ideas, or thought-pictures, which are a created image of the thought of God. This mode of knowledge is the highest and most perfect, and belongs to the highest hierarchy of Angels. The Angels of the second hierarchy know things by the knowledge which they have of the great laws and causes both of corporeal nature and created beings in general. The knowledge of the Angels of the third hierarchy is due to ideas which express particular things in relation to their proper causes. The second and third modes of knowledge are not as perfect as that of the first hierarchy. There is, therefore, an intrinsic difference among the Angels by reason of the difference in their modes of knowledge.²

¹ Dan. vii. 10.

² This is the opinion of St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theol.*, i., q. 108, a. 4; q. 55, a. 3.

Extrinsically the holy Angels are distinguished by their offices and ministries. Some are destined to serve God personally, and to be, as it were, His court; and these are the Angels of the first hierarchy. Others, though they always gaze on God, give themselves over, by His will, to the government of the universe; and are divided into two hierarchies. As each of these three hierarchies is divided into three degrees, there are, as also Holy Scripture testifies, nine choirs of Angels. The highest hierarchy consists of the Seraphim, Cherubim and Thrones. They are nearest to God, and their office is, so to speak, the personal service of God. The Thrones may be called the assistants of the throne of God, and glorify Him by the majesty, awfulness and purity of their being, inspiring a holy reverence for the Divine Majesty, and inviting all creation to adore Him. Above them are the Cherubim, whose peculiar attributes, by which they glorify God, are the clearness, penetration and depth of their knowledge, their gaze being ever fixed upon the Divine Majesty whom they praise by the sublimity of their understanding. Nearest to God are the Seraphim, who are consumed by the ardour of their love of the goodness and beauty of God. They are the highest of all the spirits, as they join love to the knowledge of the Cherubim. While the Thrones glorify God by the excellence of their being, the other two hierarchies glorify Him by their spiritual activity. Therefore, as we read in Scripture, they stand before God, crying out unceasingly: Holy, holy, holy! ¹

The Angels of the other two hierarchies are occupied in the government and ministration of the universe. To the second hierarchy belong in the first place the Dominations, who direct the carrying out of the counsels of God, though they do not them-

¹ Isa. vi. 3.

selves carry them out. Then come the Virtues, who work the mighty miracles whereby the truths of revelation are verified, and who keep the evil spirits within bounds; and lastly come the Powers, who preside over the human race and the forces of nature. To the last hierarchy belong, first the Principalities, who are the guardian angels of kingdoms and nations; then the Archangels, to whom is confided the protection of prominent and influential men such as Popes, Bishops and rulers of states; and, lastly, the Angels, who take care of individuals. These different exterior offices agree with the difference in the degrees of knowledge of the Angels, such as has been described above; and the degree of their power as well as the way of its manifestation is in complete harmony with the degree and mode of their knowledge.¹

¹Such is the opinion generally of the theologians of the Church, being based on natural reasons, on some expressions used in Scripture, and on the testimony of the Fathers, especially Dionysius the Areopagite (*De Cœlesti Hier.*, cc. 7, 8, 9) and of St. Gregory, concerning the orders and offices of the Angels (*Hom. 34 in Evang.*). Of course there is nothing defined or of faith in all this, but on the other hand there is nothing in it which contradicts reason enlightened by faith. The nine choirs of Angels are explicitly mentioned in Holy Scripture (Isa. vi. 6; xxxvii. 16; Dan. iii. 55; Eph. i. 21; Col. i. 16; Jude i. 9; Matt. xviii. 10), so are their offices in so far, at least, that some are referred to as being especially intended for the personal service of God, and others for an external ministry. It is certain that Angels protect not only individual human beings, but also whole kingdoms and nations (Exod. xiv. 19; xxiii. 23; Dan. x. 13; xii. 1); that they work great miracles and drive away devils (Tob. viii. 3; Num. xx. 16); and that, moreover, they possess an influence over the course and laws of the material creation (John v. 4; 1 Par. xxi. 30; Dan. iii. 49). We can regard this influence as quite possible without the setting aside of the laws of nature. After all it is sufficient that the Angels should, in exceptional cases and for supernatural reasons, administer aid or punishment, exercise an influence on the material creation or protect the natural order of the elements against the disturbing influences of evil spirits, though it must not be understood from this that God needs the co-operation of Angels to maintain the order established by Himself; but no other reason is to be given except the general one that God, to accomplish His external works, as far as possible makes use of subordinate causes.

2. Thus magnificent, wondrous and wisely ordained is the heavenly court of the Angels, thus vast the field of their ministering influence! Theirs is indeed a glorious creation, a creation truly divine, in which each Angel is a world in himself, and in which, taken collectively, they constitute hierarchies, one more glorious than the other, until, at last, rising in knowledge, power, beauty and holiness, they bring us to the precincts of the throne of the Divine Majesty. Indeed, the Angels are a gigantic mirror of the power and glory of the Holy Ghost. I say, of the Holy Ghost, because He, the last Person in order of the Blessed Trinity, is nearest to the creature, and because He, as the Personal expression of the spirituality of God, is in a special sense closely related to the holy Angels. On their side the Angels are, so to speak, the flower of the spiritual creation. They are a more perfect image of the Holy Ghost than any other kind of beings, and this not only by their nature, but by their grace and holiness, for they also were created in the state of sanctifying grace, and preserved that grace by their humility, fidelity and fortitude in the contest with the bad angels, and thereby merited heaven. They owe this, their confirmation in sanctity, to the Holy Ghost, as St. Basil teaches, who gives as his reason that without the Holy Ghost there is no holiness.¹ They hold even their distinctive name of spirit in common with the Holy Spirit.

From the point of view of their hierarchies and offices the Angels have another relation to the Holy Ghost.

The Holy Ghost infuses order and perfection into everything. He it is who, according to the Apostle, distributes offices and ministries.² If, therefore, different ministries and functions are laid on the holy Angels, these are given to them by the Holy Ghost.

¹ St. Basil, *De Spir. S.*, c. 16, n. 38.

² 1 Cor. xii. 5.

The highest of the Angels, the Seraphim, have a special likeness to the Person of the Holy Ghost by reason of the fervent love which distinguishes them. According to St. Thomas Aquinas, we may say that, taken generally, the ministry of the Angels in connection with us is the purifying, illuminating and perfecting of our souls; and this is precisely the operation of the Holy Ghost in us.

Let us consider more closely the benefits which the Holy Ghost confers upon us by means of our guardian Angels. It is a truth founded on Scripture and tradition that each man has his guardian Angel. Our Lord says of children that their Angels see the face of His Father who is in heaven;¹ and why should not His words apply to all men? So long as we are in this life we are, as it were, minors; we are surrounded by dangers to soul and body, and are in need of the protection of a heavenly guardian. Holy Scripture, speaking generally, says: "He shall give His Angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways".² This has been the constant and living conviction of the Church, and we can find many passages in Scripture to confirm it. The picture of the power and activity of the holy Angels, as it is put before us in the Old and New Testaments, is most surprising, magnificent and beautiful. From the time of our first parents in paradise to that of Peter, who was led out of prison by an Angel, we find them watching over men and nations, following on their steps, sharing in their joys, necessities and sorrows, and encouraging, consoling and protecting them. The world of holy Angels is always occupied about us either directly or indirectly, acting either as mediators or as executors of God's counsels regarding our salvation. Thus St. Paul says that the Angels are ministering spirits sent to minister for them who shall

¹ Matt. xviii. 10.

² Ps. xc. 11.

receive the inheritance of salvation.¹ And rightly so; for we all form *one* great household of God. The Angels are the more discerning, more powerful, more happy brethren, who, in the upper rooms of the great mansion, enjoy the beatific vision of God. It certainly behoves their loving kindness to watch over their younger brethren, to lead, teach and bring them to heaven. This is their mission, and this is why they ward off dangers which threaten our souls and bodies, why they frustrate the devil's wicked designs, why they pray for us, warn us and encourage us, and why they offer our prayers and good works to God.

Who can fail to see in all this the goodness of the Holy Ghost? Was it not He who employed Angels as His mediators in the revelation on Mount Sinai,² as prophetic messengers to Daniel³ and to Mary, and as the executor of the chastisements of God on the persecutors of the Church, such as Pharaoh, Herod,⁴ or Heliodorus?⁵ Incalculable are the benefits conferred by the Holy Ghost both on individuals and on the whole Church, by means of the holy Angels. They are the messengers of His goodness and mercy. He incites them to love us and take care of us. Our Saviour tells us that the Angels always behold the face of His Father who is in heaven, who incites them by that very vision of His face so full of goodness and mercy to work for us continually. What is the face of God but His love, His goodness and His mercy? And is not the Holy Ghost the Person of love, goodness and mercy in the Blessed Trinity? The Angels see how much He loves us, and this makes them imitate His love for us. They see how He longs to load us with benefits, and they offer themselves as the mediums of them. They see that He desires to unite all creatures in a golden bond of love,

¹ Heb. i. 14.

² Acts vii. 38, 53.

³ Dan. ix. 21.

⁴ Acts xii. 23.

⁵ 2 Macc. iii. 25.

and induce us to respond to His love by our gratitude; and in this also the Angels are ready to serve Him. Thus are the Angels drawn into the economy of love with which the Holy Ghost governs the world.

St. Basil makes an admirable summary of this when he says that the Angels for their perfection received from the Holy Ghost, first supernatural grace, and then their offices and ministries according to the measure of their holiness. He proves this by the instance of the Angels who announced the birth of Christ to the shepherds, by that of Gabriel who communicated to Daniel the prophecy of the Incarnation, and by that of the Seraphim who always cry out: Holy, holy, holy. "Remove the Holy Ghost," continues the Saint, "and with Him disappear the choirs of Angels singing praises, and all the sublime functions of the Archangels. Everything is in confusion, and there is no longer any rule, or order. . . . It would be with them as it is with an army which falls into disorder when it loses its leader, or with a choir of singers who fall into discord if the choir-master fails to beat time. . . . If then the Angels and heavenly Virtues praise God, it is through the Holy Ghost; and if they in thousands and thousands harmoniously discharge their ministry, in all this, again, the Holy Ghost is working. This heavenly and ineffable order in the service of God, these hierarchies of pure spirits, could not be save on the condition of their being directed and governed by the Holy Ghost." ¹

Let us, therefore, take these truths to heart, and adore the power, beauty and goodness of the Holy Ghost. How great and good must He be to possess such a magnificent court which He deigns to employ in our service! Surely we owe great honour and thanksgiving to the holy Angels, on account of the

¹ St. Basil., *De Spir. S.*, c. 16, n. 38.

excellence of their nature and of the incalculable good they do to us. But still more do we owe them to the Lord and Author of all good things, even the Holy Ghost, the Creator and Lord of the Angels, from whom they receive all that they possess, and whatever they do for us.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MATERIAL CREATION.

We must now leave the Angels and come down to this world. By "world" we understand here, in the first place, the whole of visible and material creation, especially our earth, with all that surrounds and influences it. Is there really any relation between this and the Holy Ghost? Without any doubt there is; for our earth, though small, is part of creation; it is the home chosen for the God-Man and His holy Mother; it is, as it were, the garden of the Sacred Humanity, the earthly kingdom of His elect, and the scene of the activity of His holy Angels. The material creation is, therefore, sufficiently important for the Holy Ghost to extend His Providence to it. Let us then consider the various relations of the Holy Ghost to the material creation. These are especially three.

1. The Holy Ghost is the Author of visible creation; this being made clear in Holy Scripture: "By the word of the Lord the heavens were established; and power of them by the Spirit of His mouth".¹ In the language of the Church, also, the Holy Ghost is called "the Lord and Giver of Life," and the Spirit who is Creator (*Creator Spiritus*). And such He is in all truth, because, as we have seen, all divine works are effected equally by the three Divine Persons. The Holy Ghost is, therefore, the Author and Maker of the visible creation, which can, in so far as it is a

¹ Ps. xxxii. 6.

free and voluntary act of love, be especially ascribed to Him. But as the work of creation is usually ascribed to the Father, when we attribute it to the Holy Ghost it must be taken in another and deeper sense, namely, in that of the arrangement and perfect ordering of the chaotic elements already created.

In this sense Scripture ascribes to the Holy Ghost an especial part in the perfecting of the material creation. In the beginning the created elements were confused, and the earth was, as Scripture says, void and empty, in other words, they were an unformed mass of rough matter, wild and unfruitful, and in a state of fermentation. Then the Spirit of God moved over the waters,¹ separated, gathered together and ordered the allied elements, and fructified them by setting free the indwelling germs of life, enabling each element to produce the beings which it contained in embryo. As the dove sits on her eggs and by her warmth hatches her young, so did the earth and heavens burst forth from the waters by the action and power of the Holy Ghost. The earth brought forth plants and beasts, and birds peopled the air, everything being done—as we read in the hundred and third Psalm—with ease, variety and wisdom. Even as our earth, hard and forbidding under the icy hand of winter, is renewed under the mild influence of spring and the warming rays of the sun, and wakes up to a life of fragrance, beauty and fertility, of which there could have been no suspicion before, so did the visible creation, under the life-giving breath and the fertilising touch of the Holy Ghost, break forth into the beauty and splendour which now adorn it. Thus did the Holy Spirit manifest Himself as the active principle of life, development, perfection, order and progress towards a given end. On this account the Holy Ghost is sometimes

¹ Gen. i. 2.

called the Finger of God, by which, according to the Psalmist, creation was effected.¹ Even as the finger proceeds from the hand, and the hand from the arm, and is employed as the instrument for works of adornment and skill, so the Holy Ghost—the last person of the Blessed Trinity and the Person of love—is, as it were, the wonder-working finger of the Godhead, by which harmony and variety are given to the visible creation, and by which it is guided to its end.²

2. The Holy Ghost makes use of creation as a means of untold good to us. First, in the natural order; because He imparts to creatures all that can make us enjoy them and render them useful to us for the preservation of the body, for the improvement of the mind, and for the comfort and amenity of life; and, secondly, in a peculiar and far higher way, by making creatures the bearers and instruments of His grace. As all theologians teach, the Holy Ghost works through the sacraments, communicating through them both His grace and Himself. But He does not thus communicate Himself without the help of material elements, as, for instance, the water of Baptism, the oil of Confirmation and Extreme Unction, and the bread and wine in the Most Holy Sacrament of the altar. The Holy Ghost makes a further use of creatures in the sacramentals which, by the blessing of the Church and the devotion of the faithful, are converted by Him into instruments of manifold spiritual and temporal benefits. Thus, thanks to the holy sacraments and the sacramentals, there is scarcely any element of importance in creation which the Holy Ghost does not turn into a source of special blessing. By the Fall the earthly creation became the instrument of a curse upon us, but now, through the Holy Ghost, it becomes, in His hand, the bearer of all salvation. We build our hopes of salvation

¹ Ps. viii. 4.

² *Summa Theol.*, i., q. 45, a. 6, ad 2.

and sanctification on the efficacy of the sacramental elements.

3. Finally, the Holy Ghost makes use of visible creation to glorify Himself by the manifestation of His attributes, not only of those which are common to the three Divine Persons, but also of His own personal attributes. He reveals and unveils Himself to men by adopting various creatures as emblems and figures of Himself. Water is a symbol of the Holy Ghost. Thus the Church in the hymn to the Holy Ghost calls Him *fons vivus*, the living fount. Water is essentially typical of purity, refreshment, mobility, life and fecundity. Without water all things wither and die. So is the Holy Ghost the principle of a better life, of the forgiveness of sins and of the consolation which refreshes and renews the soul. Through Him every supernatural bud and blossom is formed; without Him they perish.—Fire is another symbol of the Holy Ghost. At Pentecost He came down—and with good reason—under the form of tongues of fire. He is Love, and as such finds the most striking symbolic expression in the flame which never rests, which seizes on everything with irresistible force, which changes everything into itself, which illuminates and warms.—At the Transfiguration of our Lord on Mount Thabor the Holy Ghost came down under the form of a bright cloud; and this figure was most fitting; for a cloud, with its light and aerial nature, its fructifying rain, its flashing lightning and its refreshing breeze, is a most suggestive emblem of the Holy Spirit.—A mighty wind accompanied the tongues of fire at Pentecost, and its mobility, its purifying, cooling and impetuous power were, again, a figure of the Holy Ghost. It is this very symbol which, in so many languages, such as Greek, Latin, etc., gives His name to the Holy Spirit.—Again, oil, by its softening, strengthening

and light-giving properties is no less expressive of the attributes of the Holy Ghost.—Lastly, we have in the dove one of the principal symbols of Him. He Himself, when He descended on the Divine Saviour at His Baptism, chose the form of a dove. This bird is the emblem of purity, gentleness, peace, sociability and fecundity, all of which are the peculiar attributes of the Holy Ghost. If we take all these symbols together, what a sweet and beautiful picture they give us of the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity! The fundamental features in this picture—life, love, light, purity, power, impulse, gentleness and mildness—are unmistakable, and are, as we have already seen, in an especial manner descriptive of the nature of the Holy Ghost.

These considerations will make clear to us the relation of the Holy Ghost to the material creation. He is its Author, He governs it and employs it for His glory and our benefit. Creation is His kingdom, and we enjoy its good things. It follows that we must be, above all things, grateful to Him for having conferred upon us so many natural and supernatural blessings by means of His creatures. By its existence and beauty creation bears the image of the Father and Son; by its goodness, utility and beneficence it bears that of the Holy Ghost. “And God saw all the things that He had made, and they were very good,” says Holy Scripture;¹ yea, His blessing hath overflowed like a river.² In fact, the whole of creation in the hands of the Holy Ghost becomes the instrumental bearer of untold blessings. We must not overlook this. Let us then thank Him, and rejoice with all our hearts in so good a God. Furthermore, we must make use of creatures according to His intention, and if in them or through them we are able to catch a glimpse of His majesty and beauty, let it

¹ Gen. i. 31.

² Ecclus. xxxix. 27.

make us turn to Him and contemplate Him, in order to understand Him better. Truly, visible creation is a mirror reflecting the power, beauty and goodness of the Holy Ghost! The earth, with the colour and loveliness of its herbs, flowers, shrubs and trees, and the majesty of its mountains; the sea with its grandeur, vastness and power and the wondrous life in its depths; the atmosphere with its many and beautiful effects of light; the countless stars with their wondrous order and astounding magnitude and might, what are all these but an immeasurable picture which speaks to us of the Holy Ghost and His marvels? Let us be filled with awe and reverence for a Being who has made such a world, and who deigns to reveal through it something, though barely a fraction, of His perfections.

CHAPTER IX.

MAN.

THIS material creation, though in itself so beautiful, great and magnificent, was intended solely for a being who was to rule over it. This being is man. For him did the Holy Ghost call all these things into existence, and for him did He arrange them. Man is the end and head of irrational creation, and is, in himself, a most wonderful work of the Holy Ghost, even if we regard him solely from a natural point of view.

It is certain that man was created in a supernatural state, and that all the natural gifts with which he was endowed were given him only in regard to that supernatural state. In this sense he is peculiarly the work of the Holy Ghost. Nevertheless, man has even a natural relation to the Holy Ghost; and we must not overlook this, in order that we may realise how near we are to Him, and how we belong in an especial manner to Him. From this point of view we may consider man: (1) in his origin; (2) in his nature; and (3) in connection both with the irrational creatures and with his fellow men. In all these considerations we shall discover bonds which connect us with the Holy Ghost.

1. The history of man's origin leads us directly back to the Holy Ghost. Job says that the Spirit of God made him; and, indeed, if the Holy Ghost took such a prominent part in the creation of the irrational beings, must He not have taken an even greater part

in the creation of man? Holy Scripture brings this forward very prominently when it relates how God breathed the breath of life into the body of man, which had been made of the slime of the earth,¹ by which breath he became a living soul. Job calls this breath of life by the name of the Spirit of God.² The Fathers at once see in this life-giving action a revelation of the Holy Ghost, and attribute it in a special way to Him. The reason of this is that the action of animation and perfecting has always been considered distinctive of the Holy Spirit, and because the word "breath" is typical of Him who proceeds by the breath of love. This is why our Lord breathed on His Apostles when, under a corresponding outward sign, He gave them the Holy Ghost.³ Finally, the giving of the natural life of the body was a figure of the future resurrection and of the supernatural life of grace which was to follow.⁴ Man is therefore, from his very origin, in the closest relation to the Holy Ghost.

2. So is it with his nature and whole being. What distinguishes man from every other being of the visible creation is his possession of a rational soul, by reason of which he becomes a compound of matter and spirit. It is this spirituality of the human soul, with its two chief powers of understanding and will, which draws it into the closest relation to the Holy Ghost. The qualities of intelligence, discernment, prudence and wisdom, manifested by man, are exactly those which Scripture ascribes to the Holy Ghost. He is called in the sacred pages the Spirit of Truth;⁵ and wisdom, understanding and knowledge are gifts of the Holy Ghost;⁶ and for this reason when men intend to do anything which requires deliberation, prudence and discernment they invoke the help of

¹ Gen. ii. 7.

⁴ 1 Cor. xv. 45.

² Job xxvii. 3.

⁵ John xvi. 13.

³ John xx. 22.

⁶ Isa. xi. 2.

the Holy Ghost by reciting the *Veni Creator*. Let us consider the will of man, and the heart of man, and see how completely they are the work of the Holy Ghost! Piety, purity, chastity, kindness, peace, uprightness, strength and efficiency of work, all these are, according to Holy Scripture, fruits of the Holy Ghost; and this was why, when men began to deteriorate, God said: "My Spirit shall not remain in man".¹ "Oh how good and sweet is Thy Spirit, O Lord;"² . . . sweet above honey!"³ "Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me," was David's prayer.⁴ The same Finger of God which wrote the Law on the tables of stone,⁵ now writes it on the hearts of men. The words of the hymn to the Holy Ghost, which call Him the Maker and Creator of hearts, are full of meaning:—

Imple superna gratia
Quæ tu creasti pectora.

The Holy Ghost, as the Person of love, proceeds from the Heart of God. Will, love, and all that proceeds from the heart are His personal attributes, and, consequently, man, to whose heart it is so natural to be in need of love and to love, is in an especial manner the child of the Holy Ghost.

Even in the superiority of his body, in his health, in his strength, and in his endurance there is a relation between man and the Holy Ghost. This, also, is indicated in these words of the *Veni Creator*:—

Infirma nostri corporis
Virtute firmans perpeti.

Not in vain did He Himself institute a sacrament for the good of our health and for our physical welfare. In the next meditation we shall be able to adduce further proofs of this.

¹ Gen. vi. 3.

² Wisd. xii. 1.

³ Ecclus. xxiv. 27.

⁴ Ps. l. 13.

⁵ Exod. xxxi. 18.

3. The very connection of man with the material creation shows us his relation to the Holy Ghost. Visible creation is given to man to be his possession, his kingdom, and the field of his labours whereby he completes his life and strength. The better he understands the earth, the deeper he penetrates into its secrets, the more he masters its forces and utilises them, gauges and appropriates its treasures, so much the more does he extend his dominion. The industries and the arts of war depend for the most part on the skilful use man makes of nature; his culture and civilisation presuppose its conquest, and he owes much of his science and learning to the same source. Whence, then, comes this dominion of man over nature? Who is its author? We have an answer in the hundred and third Psalm. There we find a brilliant picture of the power and action of the Holy Ghost in the visible world, how He makes out of nothing, and orders and animates the various kinds of creatures. There in the midst of this magnificence we see man standing, cultivating the earth, sending out his ships to all zones and seas, ruling over the visible world as the representative of God. All this grandeur is nothing else than an operation of the Holy Ghost. "Thou shalt take away their breath, and they shall fail, and shall return to dust. Thou shalt send forth Thy spirit and they shall be created, and Thou shalt renew the face of the earth."¹

In the visible creation men do not live and work as individuals, but in society. Man proceeds from society and from the union of man with man. He lives and works in the company of others, be it in a family, a state, or church. This social bond, again, is the work of the Holy Ghost. Social life is the highest stage of life, and the Holy Ghost is the principle of all perfection. Societies, moreover, could not

¹ Ps. ciii. 29, 30.

exist without order, authority and love, all of which are effects of the Holy Ghost. In the same way that He gathered together and ordered the elements, so does He unite individual men into companies and societies. Finally, every form of society has its root in one, namely, the family, the principle of which is marriage, or the union of man and wife. In the creation of Eve from the rib of Adam, as well as in the conjugal union which is the principle of the family, the Fathers of the Church see an image—though most incomplete—of the procession of the Holy Ghost from the Father and Son, and of His activity in the Blessed Trinity. As Eve was formed from the rib near the heart of Adam, so did the Holy Ghost proceed from the Heart of the Father and Son, binding them together in beatitude and love; and as Eve later became the helpmate of Adam for the propagation of the human race, so the Holy Ghost makes us the children of God by pouring Himself out on us. Therefore St. Methodius is not afraid to say that the Holy Ghost came forth from the rib near the heart of the Eternal Word.¹ Everything in marriage—its beginning, the continuation of married life, its happiness, the blessing attached to it—presupposes love; and consequently everything in the family leads us back to the Holy Ghost as its principle. Moreover, all social bodies, from the smallest organisations to the mightiest nations and confederations of states, proceed from the family, and are only a multiplied, extended, and therefore imperfect imitation of the life, love, union and happiness in the family; and as they take their origin from the family they receive more or less of the stamp of the image of the Holy Ghost and His operations. It is He who draws men from their isolation and solitude, and binds them together in a state of mutual dependence, concord and

¹ St. Method., *Conviv. Virg.*, Or. 3, c. 8.

love, in order that they may even here below present an image of the happiness and activity of the Blessed Trinity. Later on we shall consider the Christian family and Christian society, and contemplate their relation to the Holy Ghost.

From what has been said, it can be seen how completely man, even from a natural point of view, manifests himself as a creature of the Holy Ghost. Nay, it would seem that the Holy Ghost must have a special affection for man, because he is in so many respects the privileged child of God, the son of His love—a sensitive-rational being endowed with a heart capable of giving expression to spiritual love, both by its own movements and by words expressing its feelings; and because, being the representative and, as it were, a compendium of both the spiritual and material worlds, he unites the whole of creation to the Heart of the Creator. Moreover, must not the Holy Ghost hold in reverence that nature to which in time the eternal Word from whom He proceeds was to unite Himself?

We have, therefore, every reason to turn to the Holy Ghost with an especial and childlike confidence, for we bear His image in our inmost being, and from Him comes everything which we possess. There is nothing in us which we do not owe to Him, nothing which He does not regard as His own and watch over with solicitude. There is no circumstance, no condition, no concern of human life which is not provided for by Him. If the welfare of our bodies be endangered, if we require wisdom and prudence in any charge or office, if we need ability and skill in the very business of our lives, let us turn to Him, for there is nothing that He cannot give us. It is He—as the Church says with so much reason—whose wisdom created us, and whose providence governs us.

CHAPTER X.

THE OLD TESTAMENT.

THE highest and noblest of all societies is the Church, the sole end of which is the glory of God and the salvation of man. The human race has never been left without a society of this kind. Such an institution existed even in the days of the patriarchs, when Adam, Noe and Abraham lived in tents, and was more perfectly established, and provided with law, tabernacle and priesthood, when the chosen people of God were on their way to the Promised Land, wandering in the Arabian Desert. That Church goes by the name of either the Synagogue or the Old Covenant.

This Old Covenant was, as says St. Paul,¹ both in its nature and meaning only "a shadow of things to come," a figure, namely, of the Church of the New Testament. Even as the Holy Ghost is the soul of our Church, so was He the Author and Preserver of the Church of the Old Testament. To convince ourselves of this it is necessary only to give a glance at the four principal component parts of the ancient religion: (1) its public worship; (2) its moral law; (3) its faith; and (4) its great men and saints who were, so to speak, its production.

1. The Tabernacle, so beautifully and skilfully designed, the various vessels and sacerdotal vestments, and all that pertained to the divine service, belonged primarily to the public worship of God; and the de-

¹ Col. ii. 17.

signing of them is explicitly ascribed by Scripture to the Holy Ghost. It tells us how the Spirit of God filled the two artists, Bezeleel and Ooliab, with wisdom and understanding and knowledge in all manner of work, to devise what might be made in gold, silver, brass, stone and wood.¹ Now, if the Holy Ghost took this part even in the smallest details of the external outfit of the ancient Church, how much more must He have had to do with the institution of its priesthood, with the sacrifices and means of grace of that time? These, though, as St. Thomas says,² they were not instrumental causes of the grace of redemption merited by the Passion of Christ, nevertheless were tokens of justifying faith, and as such were for those who made use of them under due personal co-operation a real help to grace and holiness.

2. The moral law was based on the Decalogue given by God on Mount Sinai; and this giving of the Law is ascribed to the Holy Ghost. In the smoke and flames on the mountain the Fathers of the Church see a manifestation of the Holy Ghost;³ moreover, we are told that the tables of the Law were written by the Finger of God. We have already seen that the Finger of God is a name given to the Holy Ghost, either because He worked wonders such as those worked before Pharaoh in Egypt, or else because He wrote the Law.⁴ The Holy Ghost is—as was shown in the last meditation—the principle of purity, holiness and all that belongs to the higher part of the nature of man. More evidently still was He the principle of all this in the Church of the Old Testament, which was supernaturally instituted for the salvation of men, and the members of which were consequently bound to lead a supernatural life. The

¹ Exod. xxviii. 3; xxxi. 3.

² *Summa Theol.*, iii., q. 62, a. 6.

³ Exod. xix. 16; cf. St. Cyp., *Test.*, lib. 3, c. 101.

⁴ Exod. xxxi. 18; cf. St. Aug., *Enarr. in Ps.* 8, n. 7; Exod. viii. 19.

Law itself, by its severity, purity and sublimity, and at the same time by its gentleness and adaptability to the hardness of the hearts of the children of Israel, is a striking reflection of the sanctity and goodness of the Holy Ghost.

3. The faith, or treasure of revealed truths, was preserved, guarded and expounded by the priesthood which, under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, enjoyed even under the old dispensation a kind of infallibility, on account of which our Saviour Himself commanded that respect and submission should be paid to it.¹ God Himself vouchsafed to give answers through the priests.² Even at the time of their deepest moral corruption the Holy Ghost did not withdraw this gratuitous gift of grace from them, as can be seen in the case of Caiphas. "It is expedient for you that one man should die for the people," said that high-priest in his hatred of our Lord; and St. John sees in his words a prophecy of the Holy Ghost referring to the atoning Death of the Redeemer.³ Alongside of and above the priesthood we find the seers and prophets who spoke in the name of the Holy Ghost, and made known to the people the will of God as well as His designs in the present and future, and thus confirmed, augmented and expounded revealed truth. The gift of prophecy is expressly ascribed to the Holy Ghost, both in the Old and New Testaments;⁴ indeed we ourselves say in the Creed that He spoke by the prophets. The long line of prophets is a glorious testimony to the Holy Ghost, and reveals His divine attributes in the most striking manner. It shows forth His wisdom, His power before which kings and nations bow down, and His love which embraces all men and chooses His prophets from all conditions and ranks of life—a

¹ Matt. xxiii. 2.

² Exod. xxv. 22.

³ John xi. 51.

⁴ 2 Peter i. 21; 1 Cor. xiv. 2; Dan. ii. 28.

Jeremias from the palace, an Aggeus from a shepherd's tent, a Solomon from the throne, and even a Balaam from a rejected people—and charges all alike with the divine mission to warn, threaten and bless the nations. Not only does the Holy Ghost give testimony through His prophets to the kingdom of the Messias and the destinies of the future Church, but He also gives testimony to Himself, to His descent in the future on the Incarnate Word,¹ to His descent on the Apostles and faithful at Pentecost,² and to His glorious rule over the Church and over the hearts of men.³

4. The Holy Ghost reveals Himself in an equally admirable manner in the great men and saints of the Old Testament. He who does not begrudge the trouble of searching the Scriptures will find a most striking revelation of the power of the Holy Ghost in the most salient points of the history of the chosen people. It will be sufficient here to touch briefly on the calling of Joseph in Egypt,⁴ on the miracles of Moses, the prophet and lawgiver,⁵ on the appointment of the seventy ancients,⁶ on the raising up of the Judges and their heroic deeds and miracles, especially those of Josue,⁷ Othoniel,⁸ Jephthe,⁹ Gedeon,¹⁰ Samson;¹¹ and then, later on, the glorious times of the kingdom of Israel under David¹² and Solomon;¹³ and, finally, the calling of the prophets Eliseus,¹⁴ Isaias¹⁵ and Daniel.¹⁶ Are not these events a sort of summary of the glories of the Old Testament? If—as we know they are—miracles worked for the preservation and attestation of the divine revelation are especially the work of the Holy

¹ Isa. xi. 2.² Joel ii. 28.³ Ezech. xxxvi. 26.⁴ Gen. xli. 38.⁵ Isa. lxiii. 14.⁶ Num. xi. 25.⁷ Deut. xxxiv. 9.⁸ Jud. iii. 10.⁹ Jud. xi. 29.¹⁰ Jud. vi. 34.¹¹ Jud. xiii. 25.¹² 2 Kings xxiii. 2.¹³ Wisd. vii. 7.¹⁴ 4 Kings ii. 9, 15.¹⁵ Isa. vi. 9.¹⁶ Dan. iv. 5; xiii. 45.

Ghost, we cannot fail to perceive His share in the maintenance of the Church of the Old Testament. How many times did he not save it and defend it miraculously in the times of the Judges and Kings? How marvellously did He protect it in the days of the Maccabees! St. Basil points this out most conclusively: "All creatures in heaven and earth owe their perfection to the Holy Ghost. Who can deny that, in all that concerns man, the merciful designs of the Father and the Word are accomplished through the Holy Ghost? Under the Old Covenant everything was accomplished through Him, whether it were the blessings of the patriarchs, the graces attached to the Law, the types and prophecies, success in war, miracles, or, again, the preparations made for the coming of our Lord in the flesh."¹ He must have been, indeed, a divine Spirit who knew how to convert the Law, the ceremonies, the means of grace and the saints of the Old Testament into a preparation for the New Testament, whereby the hearts and understanding of the people were made ready to receive it.

The glories of the Old Testament are, therefore, a great revelation of the Holy Ghost. What a world of wonders is contained in this Old Testament! What grand figures are the patriarchs, prophets, high-priests, judges, kings, heroes and saints! What a treasury of talents and gifts, of virtue and sanctity! How admirable were the faith and obedience of Abraham, the chastity and talent for government of Joseph, the forgiving clemency and meekness of David, the warlike courage of the Maccabees, the wisdom and gentleness of Moses, the childlike piety and detachment of Esther, the determination and trust in God of Judith! All these heroes of virtue were disciples

¹ St. Basil., *De Spir. S.*, c. 16, n. 37; cf. St. Cyr. Hier., *Catech.*, xvi., n. 25 *sqq.*

and children of the Holy Ghost! The whole of the Old Testament was a school of the Holy Ghost. Oh, what an excellent Master! What would He not do for us if we would but give ourselves over to His teaching and guidance? If His grace was so efficacious even under the Old Law, what may we not expect now that He is so much nearer to us, and so much more lavish with His grace? How resplendently do His power and fidelity towards men shine forth in the Old Testament history! He loves mankind, and delights not only to load them with natural gifts, but raises them to a supernatural life; He maintains this life in them; He founded, even under the Old Covenant, an institution for their salvation, governed by Him with such wisdom and power, that in spite of human frailties, in spite of man's relapse into the lowest depths of paganism, it still produced wonderful fruits of virtue and sanctity. These manifold and magnificent productions bear witness to the power and greatness of their Author. The saints of the Old Testament were poor frail men like unto us, yet we can see what they became under the guidance of the Holy Ghost.

We children of the Catholic Church must not forget to thank the Holy Ghost for the institutions of the Old Testament; because it was for us that He made and preserved them. We are the happy heirs of His promises and gifts. The Old Testament is, so to speak, the solid foundation and magnificent vestibule of the Church of the New Testament. What in His goodness He gave to our forefathers in the faith, He has also bestowed upon us. Blessed and praised be, therefore, the God of our fathers and our God, "the Spirit of understanding, holy, one, manifold, subtle, eloquent, active, undefiled, sure, sweet, loving that which is good, quick, which nothing hindereth, beneficent, gentle, kind, steadfast, assured, secure, having

all power, overseeing all things, and containing all spirits. . . . She (wisdom) remaining in herself, the same reneweth all things, and through nations conveyeth herself into holy souls, she maketh the friends of God and prophets." ¹ How wonderfully do these words apply to the Holy Ghost's operations in the Old Testament! Briefly and concisely they reveal to us the power and action of the Holy Spirit in that first creation of supernatural life and of grand and true sanctity.

¹ Wisd. vii. 22 *sqq.*

CHAPTER XI.

THE CHURCH.

THE Holy Ghost revealed Himself in the most magnificent manner both in creation and in the Old Testament. All this was, however, only a prelude and preparation, or, as it were, a draft and sketch of what He was going to do in the Church of the New Testament. Our holy Church is quite especially His work, and, as such, will be the subject of our present meditation. Let us then briefly examine: (1) what the Church is; and (2) in what relation the Holy Ghost stands to her.

1. What is the Holy Catholic Church? She is a living society, a union of human beings who, under the guidance of Christ's representative, the Roman Pontiff, are all striving together to attain salvation, holding one faith, under one law, and with the same means of grace. The aim, therefore, of this society is to attain salvation by the means ordained by Christ. For this end the Church must be provided with corresponding attributes, and hold out the means suitable to attain it. The first among these attributes is unity. There can be only one true Church, because Christ instituted only one, not several differing the one from the other; for had He done this men would have to find salvation in falsehood as well as in truth. As there is only one God and one Truth, so is there only one Church. The second attribute is visibility. Our Lord Jesus Christ, God made Man, founded the Church for men, and therefore gave it laws and ordin-

ances adapted to the visible life of men. An invisible Church would avail for pure spirits only. The third attribute of the Church is her immutable duration for all ages. As she is man's only way to God she must be always existing in the world and always the same.

It is necessary that these attributes of the Church be manifested by external marks, belonging to her so essentially and characterising her so unmistakably that there is no one who would not be able, easily and with certainty, to distinguish her from any other Church. These marks are, first, Unity, visibly represented by the one visible head, the Pope, whose authority as teacher, pastor and priest at once produces and preserves interior unity in the acceptance of the same faith, the same commandments, the same means of grace. That Church can alone be true which possesses one supreme visible head. The second mark of the Church is Catholicity, by means of which she, without losing her unity, expands and extends herself throughout the world in such a striking manner that every one can find her and see her, as though she were a city set upon a mountain. Holiness is the third mark, which ever must reveal itself in the true Church by miracles and the possession of those gratuitous gifts of grace which our Lord Himself declared to be the distinguishing mark of the true faith and sanctity.¹ A Church which is always producing saints, whose holiness is divinely attested by the gift of miracles, must be holy. The fourth mark is Apostolicity, or the identity of the Church in all ages with that of the Apostles. If the Church be true she must always remain the same as when she was founded, have the same government, and be possessed of the same authority, transmitted from one chief pastor to another. The exterior mark and the pledge of this inheritance of apostolic authority

¹ Mark xvi. 71.

is what goes by the name of apostolic succession, or the transmission of the supreme pastoral authority by the imposition of hands, and by mission handed on from one bishop to another, so that a chain is formed which can be traced back to St. Peter. That Church which can prove her descent from the Apostles and her union with them must be the one true and apostolic Church, because she—no less than the Church of the apostolic age—is founded and built on the Apostles and on St. Peter, and possesses the self-same government. She is, therefore, one and the same Church as the Church of the Apostles.

Such are the attributes which are necessary to the very essence of the Church. But in order to fulfil her end, the sanctification of man, she must furthermore possess divine powers and faculties identical with those ordained by Christ and exercised by Him ; and she must, moreover, have the divine mission to use the said powers, namely, the teaching, pastoral and priestly faculties for the salvation of man. All this is contained in the teaching, pastoral and priestly offices of the Church, of which we will speak later. This equipment of the Church is completed by the possession of the divine gifts, which impress upon her the visible seal of divine power and majesty, and manifest her to the whole world as the one true Spouse of Jesus Christ.

Such is our Holy Catholic Church, and such is her essence, such her constitution, such the end and object of her existence. Thus formed and thus endowed, she is indeed the country and home of our souls, the institution ordained for the salvation of man, God's representative in her dealings with us and our representative before God, the work of Christ, His Mystical Body, nay more, she is Christ still dwelling with us and working for our salvation. She is all this because He founded her, and because He

is her living and invisible Head, and because He has communicated His power and authority to her, to remain with her and ever to work in her. The Church has no object save that which He Himself had when He was dwelling here below; she is His instrument for our salvation. This is how we must regard the Church. We must feel for her not only as a child feels towards its mother, but we must, in a certain sense, see Jesus Christ in her. After Him she is everything to us here below.

2. Let us now contemplate the close and essential relation in which the Holy Ghost stands to this our Church. This relation is threefold. First, He belongs actually to her, as our Lord affirms explicitly when He says: "The Father shall give you another Paraclete. . . . He shall abide with you and shall be in you.¹ . . . If I go not the Paraclete will not come to you; but if I go I will send Him to you."² The Holy Ghost is on this account called "the Promise of the Father," this promise having been fulfilled when the Holy Ghost was sent on the Day of Pentecost. Therefore the Holy Ghost belongs to the Church by the will of our Lord Jesus Christ, and without Him the Church would not be perfect, as is shown by these words of the Gospel: "The Spirit was not yet given because Jesus was not yet glorified".³ The Fathers of the Church hold this doctrine. St. Irenæus says: "Where the Church is there also is the Spirit of God, and where the Spirit of God is there also the Church is and all grace". He therefore calls the Holy Ghost the dowry, the gift, the breath of the Church's life and communion with Christ.⁴ In the words of St. Augustine the Church is the city and house of the Holy Ghost.⁵ The Fathers gave very

¹ John xiv. 16, 17.

² John xvi. 7; cf. 13 *sqq.*

³ John vii. 39.

⁴ St. Iren., *Adv. hæres.*, lib. 3, c. 24.

⁵ *Ench. de fide, spe et car.*, c. 56.

good reasons for what they affirm. For instance, St. Gregory says that the Church is the Body of Christ,¹ and that even as a spirit is necessary to our body so is the Holy Spirit necessary to the Body of Christ.² As husband and wife are one flesh, so are Christ and the Church one Spirit—the Holy Ghost being this Spirit. The Church being the Spouse and Mystical Body of Christ, she must also have the Holy Spirit, and without the Holy Spirit she would not be the Church of Christ.

Secondly, the Holy Ghost does not belong to the Church as an inactive adjunct for her adornment and perfection, but is so essential to her that without Him she would neither do nor be what she is intended to do and be. Everything comes to her through the Holy Ghost; and above all, her attributes come from Him. By the Holy Ghost alone is she the true Church. To her alone is the Holy Ghost given, for one soul animates only one body with the members belonging to it. "One body and one spirit," says the Apostle.³ As the Father and Son are One in the Holy Spirit, so also is the Church one in the same Spirit. Besides, how could the Church be visible except through the operation of the Holy Ghost in her teaching, pastoral and priestly offices? This guidance of the Holy Ghost is so manifestly divine and so manifestly supernatural in its effects that they become an unmistakable proof of His presence in the Church. Again, what is it that keeps the Church unchanged both interiorly and exteriorly? It is the Holy Ghost. Even as the Sacred Humanity of Christ participated in all the prerogatives of the Godhead by Its hypostatic union with the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, so is the Church immutable in holiness and

¹ St. Aug., *Enarr. in Ps.* 18, n. 10; *Serm.* 341, c. 10.

² St. Aug., *Serm.* 268, c. 2.

³ Eph. iv. 4.

truth because she is indissolubly united to the Holy Ghost, who is immutable Truth, Holiness and Love.

The same thing applies to the marks of the Church. The visible mark of unity lies in the one visible head from whom spiritual unity is communicated to the members. But the higher Principle of unity is the Holy Ghost who, by uniting Christ, the invisible Head, to the visible head, and by uniting the latter to the members, and, again, the members to him and among themselves, makes them all into one spiritual whole. Catholicity, again, is only unity in multiplicity and extension; consequently, the Holy Ghost by being the Principle of her unity is also the Principle of her extension and propagation, for it is He who animates, perfects and develops the whole mystical body of the Church. Again, Holiness—the unmistakable mark of this—consists in the miracles by which God is continually declaring the sanctity of the members of the Church. Once more, Apostolicity depends on the imposition of hands and the transmission of authority from one bishop to another, which can be traced like a golden thread right up to the times of the Apostles. Both of these—miracles and the imposition of hands—are especially operations of the Holy Ghost. Thus, as we can see, all the attributes of the Church and all the conditions of her existence have the Holy Ghost as their Principle.

Now, let us first consider the effect of these attributes and powers on the Church's great work, the salvation of the world. In the passages which have been already quoted the Fathers call the Holy Ghost the soul of the Church, and the breath of life which quickens, preserves, enlightens and guides her. This is a fact. When did the Church begin her existence and work? Not till Pentecost. Yet even before that day the Church was constituted, organised in her essential parts, and armed with the necessary powers;

her doctrines had been proclaimed, the Apostles chosen, the sacraments instituted, the hierarchy established—yet the Church neither moved nor lived. The divine powers within her slumbered, her mission was a sealed book, no one preached, baptised or gave absolution, nor was the Holy Sacrifice offered. Jews and pagans still stood expectantly at the door, yet no one opened to them. The Church lay, as it were, in a trance, like that in which the body of Adam lay before he received the breath of life. She was like unto a gigantic machine which is indeed put together, but is not yet set in motion by the master hand of him who made it; or again, we may compare her to a mighty vessel which is equipped and manned, but waits for the signal to put to sea. In this condition did the Church lie until the ninth hour of the holy Feast of Pentecost, when the Holy Ghost came down on her in the rushing of wind and tongues of fire. That was the moment of her quickening. Now she arose and began her work. The Apostles stepped forth, mighty in speech and miracle; they preached from pulpit and house top, and spread over the world with astounding rapidity. Multitudes streamed through the doors of the Church, the fonts were crowded, and in the sanctuary were celebrated those wondrous divine mysteries in which the Sacrifice of the Son of God is perpetuated, and by means of which He remains ever present in the Church.

This wonderful life began on Pentecost; it was called into being and is preserved by the Holy Ghost. If it ever came to pass, in less happy days, that this life lost its full vigour, that the lamp of the sanctuary burned dimly, that the watchmen of the Church slept, the Holy Ghost has never failed to revive the spirit of the Church, either by means of great men and chosen instruments who roused the sleepers and purified the sanctuary from the contamination of the

world, or else by storms which He called up from without, which raged over the damaged building till its walls tottered, and the negligent workmen were stirred up to support and repair it. Gloriously has He always defended the Church against adversaries and oppressors whose criminal audacity has tried to overthrow her ramparts and invade the sanctuary! They have been cast out as was Heliodorus,¹ and overthrown by that invisible force which dwells in the sanctuary, and were either converted or annihilated. All works of men, however firmly established, have either been destroyed or have vanished before the ravages of time; but the Church stands, old yet ever new, a temple and fortress of God, set up on a mountain in the beauty of her peace. Calmly and complacently does she watch the efforts and struggles of human vicissitudes and the ambitious attacks of the world beating against her and breaking themselves to pieces at her feet. The forty-fifth and forty-seventh Psalms describe in the most beautiful manner this presence of God in His Church, and His protection of her. The God who thus defends and protects her is the Holy Ghost, who is ever quickening, governing, defending, raising and extending her. As of old the chosen people pressed forward to the Promised Land, unimpeded, well-ordered and peacefully, in spite of the terrors of the wilderness, the swords of their enemies and the maledictions and snares of the powers of darkness, even so does the Church march on triumphantly, in spite of all the changes, persecution and hostility of the world, being borne up on the wings of the Holy Ghost, who fights for her with His supernatural power and truth. On her course she is ever growing, for she is always receiving into her fold new children to repair the losses she has sustained by the inconstancy and folly of men. St. Augustine says

¹2 Macc. iii. 24.

truly: "What the soul is to the body of man, that is the Holy Ghost to the Body of Christ, namely, the Church. The Holy Ghost works throughout the whole Church in the same way that the soul works in all the members of the body."¹

Thirdly, it follows that the Holy Ghost is given to our Church in a way unknown before, either as to fulness, security or continuity. St. Gregory Nazianzen lays great stress on this. He says that the Holy Ghost is now given to us in a perfect manner, not, as previously, only in His operations, but essentially. . . . Even as the Son conversed with us visibly, so did the Holy Ghost come down on us.² In a discourse ascribed to St. Augustine we find it said that the Holy Ghost did not descend on the Apostles for a mere passing visit, but to dwell in them as an abiding Paraclete. . . . He was on that day with the faithful not only by the grace of His visitation and operation, but by the actual presence of His Majesty. "It was not merely the fragrance of the balm that was received, but the balm, the oil of anointing itself, by the fragrance of which the whole world should be sanctified, so that all who would accept His teaching should become partakers of God."³

It is true that the Holy Ghost was with the Church of the Old Testament, and, as we have seen, illuminated, governed and sanctified her. But His influence upon the ancient teaching, pastoral and priestly offices was less determinate, weaker and more uncertain, and, to a large extent, only prefigured by types and prophecies His future union with the Catholic Church. The Church of the Old Law had no God Incarnate as its living Head, and did not, therefore, possess the Holy Ghost in the same fulness.

¹ *Serm. 267 in Pent., i., c. 4.*

² *St. Greg. Naz., Orat. 41 in Pent., n. 11.*

³ *Appendix^a Serm. in Pent., n. 2.*

The union of the Holy Ghost with the Church of the New Law is the effect, and, as it were, the emanation and continuation of the union of Christ with His Mystical Body, and is analogous to it up to a certain point, especially in its indissolubility, in accordance with our Lord's promise: "I will send you another Paraclete that He may abide with you for ever".¹

The union of the Holy Ghost with the Church is not dependent upon the will and co-operation of man, as it is in the case of His union with individual souls. So long as the Church remains the Mystical Body of Christ, so long as the union of Christ with the Holy Ghost continues, the union of the Holy Ghost with the Church will not cease. Individual members of the Church may lose Him, but He will never depart from the Church herself. His union with the Church is a divinely accomplished fact. Even as the divine and human natures by their union with the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity constitute a unity of life which never ceases to be, so is Christ indissolubly united to His Mystical Body in the Holy Ghost. St. Bernard makes use of a very beautiful expression when he calls the Holy Ghost "the kiss" wherewith our Lord kissed His Church in the person of the Apostles when He said: "Receive the Holy Ghost".² The indwelling of the Holy Ghost makes the Church a true, living and supernatural mystery. In this sense, according to St. Thomas, when we say: "I believe in the Holy Catholic Church," we have to make our profession of faith with reference to the Holy Ghost who sanctifies the Church.³ The uncreated sanctity of the Church is nothing else but the Holy Ghost, this idea being conveyed by the Apostle when he says "that the Church is a habitation of God built together in the Spirit".⁴

¹ John xiv. 15.

³ *Summa Theol.*, ii 2, q. 51, a. 9, ad 5.

² *Serm. 8 in Cant.*, n. 2.

⁴ Eph. ii. 22.

Such is the mystery of the Church perfected by the descent of the Holy Ghost, by His presence and operations. When Scripture speaks about the house on Mount Sion which was wholly filled by the Holy Ghost who rested upon each one there,¹ the words may be applied in their fullest sense to the Church. She is the house built by the Holy Ghost; she is quickened, directed and guided by Him. She is His house, built by Him, in the truest and fullest sense of the word; and if the edifice be but touched, the fire, glory and majesty of the Holy Ghost shine forth. If we give even a superficial glance through the Book of the Acts—which is, in fact, the first page of the history of the Church—we find frequent mention of the Holy Ghost, and everything is ascribed to Him. The four Gospels are the history of our Lord; and in like manner we might call the Acts the Gospel of the Holy Ghost. It is therefore with much reason that in the Creed the profession of faith in the Church follows immediately after that in the Holy Ghost; and even as the creation and redemption of the world belong to the Father and Son, so are the foundation and guidance of the Church the especial work of the Holy Ghost.

It follows, then, that we who are children of the Catholic Church are under the special guidance of the Holy Ghost and in special relation to Him; and, further, that the action of the Holy Ghost is a peculiar mark of our era. Should we therefore not consider it imperative to pay Him explicit homage and to give Him marks of love? Moreover, it follows that we owe Him especial gratitude. Let us ask ourselves what we should be without the Church. She is the country and home of our souls, she is our benefactress and teacher, she is our mother, and, in a word, after God, she is everything to us. We owe all this to the

¹ Acts ii. 2, 3.

Holy Ghost, because the Church is His house, His kingdom, His spouse. Whatever the Church is and does is done by the Holy Ghost. We cannot enter a Catholic church without being reminded of His benefits. The font, the confessional, the pulpit, the altar rail, the tabernacle speak of Him, for He it is who showers on us those benefits which they represent, and by which He communicates Himself to us and makes us children of God. He teaches us, He forgives us our sins, and by His power He consecrates the Body of Christ and gives It to us. Let us never forget Him, for His benefits are our life. Let us rejoice in His gifts, and let us never omit to have a heartfelt gratitude towards the Giver.

CHAPTER XII.

THE HIERARCHY.

IN the last meditation we considered what may be called the outline of the Church, and saw how the Holy Ghost has been given to her in an especial manner. We must now consider more closely what are the constituent parts of the Church and examine who those are among her members who possess the Holy Ghost more particularly. First, there is the hierarchy. We must therefore consider: (1) what we are to understand by the hierarchy; (2) in what relation the Holy Ghost stands to it; and (3) what conclusions are to be drawn.

1. By the hierarchy are to be understood those who, collectively, are in their various orders and degrees the holders and representatives of the spiritual authority, and, in other words, constitute the government of the Church. As a whole, the hierarchy exercises a threefold power, namely, the teaching, the pastoral and the priestly office. This threefold power is at once necessary and sufficient for the Church's end; because man, in order to attain to eternal life, requires truth, grace and exterior direction. Truth is taught through the teaching office, grace is dispensed by means of the priestly office, while the laws which govern the Church, as well as the use of the means of grace, are determined by the pastoral office. Christ Himself possessed and used this threefold power, and bequeathed it to the Church to remain with her for ever, but not in a vague and undeterminate way.

He gave it over to certain determinate functionaries who—from the simple clerics of the Church to the deacons, priests, bishops and Pope—exercise this power in their given degree, and constitute the government of the Church. Nothing is more clearly expressed in Scripture than this truth.

Our Lord confided this ecclesiastical power to the Apostles only; for to them alone did He say: "As the Father hath sent Me, I also send you";¹ "he that heareth you heareth Me";² "whatsoever you shall bind and loose upon earth shall be bound and loosed in heaven".³ They alone were to feed the flock;⁴ upon them alone was the Church to be built;⁵ and they are in a certain sense the Church, because they alone constitute the governing body of the Church.⁶ Christ willed His Church to be a perfect, not an imperfect society. Therefore He ordained that her members should not be of equal rank, but that some should be subordinate to and dependent upon others. He willed that some members should be greater and others less, that some should command and that others should obey, similarly as, in the human body, different members perform different functions.⁷ In this manner the Church was to be an image of her Divine Founder. Christ, indeed, belongs to the Church, but not as an ordinary member; for He is the Head whence proceed all life, power and government. He did not, therefore, unite Himself in the same way to all the members, but with some in a peculiar manner, for they were to be the representatives of His own action as Head, Lord and Ruler of the Church, and visible instruments of His royal and high-priestly office. Through them the Church becomes not only a Spouse, but also a Mother; for

¹ John xx. 21.

⁴ John xxi. 15.

⁷ 1 Cor. xii. 14.

² Luke x. 16.

⁵ Matt. xvi. 18.

³ Matt. xviii. 18.

⁶ Matt. xviii. 17.

she not only learns, but also teaches, she is not only sanctified, but is herself a sanctifying power. For this reason He gave to these chosen ones powers such as He did not give to all; and thereby these words of the Apostle are literally fulfilled: "You are the body of Christ and members of member; God gave some apostles and some prophets and other some doctors;¹ and Him He hath made Head over all the Church, which is His body, and the fulness of Him who is filled all in all".²

2. Such is the hierarchy of the Church. Let us now see in what relation it stands to the Holy Ghost. The hierarchy was, as we have seen, founded by Jesus Christ Himself. As God made Man He possessed all power in Himself, and He communicated it to the Apostles as His visible representatives. But even as Christ exercised the said threefold power only through the Holy Ghost, so did He will that this power should pass to the Apostles and their successors and be exercised by them also through Him. It is, therefore, the Holy Ghost who forms the ecclesiastical hierarchy, and does so in several ways.

First, it is evident that the threefold hierarchical power—the power to dispense the sacraments, to preach the faith and to govern the Church—is in itself an operation of the Holy Ghost. He is the Spirit of truth³ and the Spirit of holiness⁴ which is communicated to men by the sacraments. He it is from whom proceeds all authority within the Church, and He gives His gifts to whom He will.⁵ Thus every office of the Church is either directly or indirectly an office of the Holy Ghost;⁶ and this is why St. Paul says to the bishops: "The Holy Ghost hath placed you bishops to rule the Church of God".⁷

Secondly, it is the Holy Ghost who calls men into

¹ 1 Cor. xii. 27; Eph. iv. 11.

² Eph. i. 22.

³ John xv. 26.

⁴ Rom. i. 4. ⁵ 1 Cor. xii. 11.

⁶ 2 Cor. iii. 8.

⁷ Acts xx. 28.

the hierarchy. It is the prerogative of the Master of the Church to confer offices. Even as in the Old Testament the Holy Ghost chose and called the prophets, so now does He choose and call His Apostles. We have an incontestable evidence of this in Holy Scripture, where it is shown that the election of the Apostle Mathias was made under the guidance of the Holy Ghost;¹ who also foretold the defection of Judas Iscariot.² The same thing is plainly manifested in the call of Paul and Barnabas, when the Holy Ghost says: "Separate me Saul and Barnabas for the work whereunto I have taken them".³ He who is not called by the Holy Ghost should not venture to enter the sanctuary, and he who intrudes himself unbidden should fear lest the office which he has taken on himself may be an occasion of his own ruin, all the more dangerous the holier the office is. We see an example of this in Simon Magus, who wished to purchase the gifts of the Spirit with money.⁴

Thirdly, not only does the Holy Ghost call men to the offices of the Church, but He also invests them. In the State no one may be invested with an office unless his appointment be legally confirmed. It is the same in the Church. The instalment in an ecclesiastical office must be preceded by consecration to it, and by the handing over of the powers attached to it. For the higher orders of the Church consecration is a real sacrament, which communicates the grace of the Holy Ghost for the lawful exercise of the ministry; this communication of the Spirit being expressed by the words: "Receive the Holy Ghost". Moreover this consecration impresses an indelible mark or character on the soul of him who has received it. Therefore the chosen member of the hierarchy is not only set apart for his work

¹ Acts i. 24, 26.

² Acts i. 16.

³ Acts xiii. 2.

⁴ Acts viii. 19.

outwardly by unction, the imposition of hands and prayer, but his very soul is equipped for it by the Holy Ghost Himself.

Even this does not suffice, for, in the fourth place, He inwardly forms those whom He has called to the office, and directs them in their exercise of it. For three years did our Lord instruct the Apostles and prepare them for their vocation. But how unsatisfactory was the result! All His teaching made only a surface impression on them, and they had no real understanding of what He meant. Even on their way to the Mount of Olives, just before the Ascension, they put a question to Him which showed what a purely Jewish view they took of the kingdom of the Messiah, and that they expected Him to carry out immediately a political-religious scheme. Several times did He console them with allusions to the coming of the Holy Ghost who would make all things plain to them and would lead them into all truth; but He refrained from doing more than proclaim His law and doctrine, and left it to the Holy Ghost to teach them the interior meaning. But what changed men they were when they left that upper chamber after the coming of the Holy Ghost! How illuminated were their minds! In what a new and resplendent light did they see the whole of revelation! How capable were their minds to lay open all the treasures of Holy Scripture! How fully did they realise the scope of their mission, and what courage and ability they showed! Of a sudden they were endowed with all the grace and gifts necessary to their vocation. Such was the effect of the presence of the Holy Ghost, even in the very first moment of His coming!

He came and formed them interiorly, and afterwards remained with them to guide them in the exercise of their vocation. When difficult questions

arose He enlightened them and gave them an answer to all their doubts;¹ He taught them by signs and miracles.² He pointed out to them where they were to labour, and guided their movements, sometimes directing them to individuals,³ sometimes to countries and nations.⁴ He prevented them from going to other places,⁵ warned them of dangers and prepared them for persecution.⁶ He consoled them in their labours and sufferings,⁷ and, in short, proved on every occasion that the Apostles were His chosen instruments. Even as the wind drives the clouds before it, and the clouds pour down on the earth their fructifying rain, so did the Holy Ghost move His Apostles whithersoever He would, while He Himself directed their steps.⁸

Lastly, the Holy Ghost glorifies the members of the hierarchy here below as well as in eternity. Here below they have the honour of belonging to the august hierarchy which is the representative of the highest authority, the messenger of God to men and the mediator between earth and heaven. Through them earth raises itself to heaven, and heaven bows itself down to the earth. Furthermore He glorifies them by the wonderful efficacy which He gives to their words, as we can see in the first public appearance of the Apostles on the Day of Pentecost, when three thousand accepted the Christian faith and asked for baptism.⁹ That was the first manifestation of the Church's efficaciousness, of which we are now constant witnesses. The Holy Ghost also glorifies the hierarchy by the so-called gratuitous gifts (*gratiæ gratis datæ*) and by miracles. These showed themselves as soon as the Apostles began to preach, and the whole pagan world was filled with astonishment

¹ Acts x. 19; xi. 12.

⁴ Acts xiii. 4.

⁷ Acts xiii. 52; ix. 31.

² Acts x. 10.

⁵ Acts xvi. 6, 7.

⁸ Acts xx. 22.

³ Acts viii. 29.

⁶ Acts xx. 23.

⁹ Acts ii. 41.

at so great a power bestowed on men, which made them superior to everything which had been hitherto regarded as most invincible.¹ Again, He glorifies the Apostles and their successors by the gift of personal holiness, and, finally, by their state of beatitude, in which they are set on thrones and invested with an indescribable dignity and glory. They will one day be placed on twelve thrones to judge the twelve tribes of Israel² and the Angels,³ and will shine like the stars for all eternity.⁴ The glory which they possess here below is nothing but a feeble image of the glory which will be theirs in heaven.

If we look at it from this twofold point of view nothing could be grander than this long line of priests, bishops and popes, each of whom transmits his authority to his successor by a chain which can be traced back through hundreds of years to St. Peter, and through him to Jesus Christ, the Head and Beginning of the Church. Can there be anything more wonderful or glorious than this hierarchy, the members of which wear either the crown of learning, the aureola of sanctity, or bear in their hands the palm of martyrdom? What can equal this venerable assembly in wisdom, virtue and holiness? Let us try to follow it on its course through the centuries of our era. What is it that can stop its march? Who can vanquish it? None! be it enemy, oppressor or persecutor. A higher power fights for it and in it. What was it that struck down such great ones of the earth as Attila, Genseric and Alaric, and many others even to the present age, and made them tremble before the glance of this hierarchy or its representatives? It was nothing but the majesty of the Holy Ghost which shone on them from the tiara or mitre. The hierarchy is the most glorious and

¹ Acts viii. 10, 19.

² Matt. xix. 28.

³ 1 Cor. vi. 3.

⁴ Dan. xii. 3.

most mighty work of the Holy Ghost. Each member of it, even if he belong to only the lower orders of the Church, becomes invincible and can defy the world. We find an instance of this in St. Stephen, who, though only a deacon, was filled with the Holy Ghost,¹ and confounded the Synagogue by his wisdom and courage. St. Basil's words to Modestius, the imperial minister, are well known. When the latter asked him with amazement how it was that he had the courage to resist the commands of the emperor, Basil replied: "Do not wonder. Perhaps you have never before met a Christian bishop."

3. Now, what conclusions are we to draw from all this? There are two to be drawn. First, if we belong to the ecclesiastical hierarchy, in whatever grade, let us thank the Holy Ghost most heartily for having conferred on us such a great grace. To be even the lowest member of the hierarchy is a great honour and happiness, which it would be impossible to buy by either talent or merit. It is a pure grace of the Holy Ghost, who, having vouchsafed to cast a glance on us, has chosen us to be His instruments for the good of men and the glory of God. It is He Himself who, as we have seen, forms the hierarchy, the call to which comes from Him alone. Thus without Him no one can lawfully belong to it. Let us recognise this and be thankful. It is, furthermore, obvious that if the Holy Ghost is in such close relation to the hierarchy, all that it accomplishes is done by Him, and we should have nothing more at heart than to unite ourselves to Him by true fervent devotion and persevere in it, that thus we may become worthy and efficient members of the hierarchy. An instrument is useful in that measure in which it answers to the skill of the craftsman. The worship of the Holy Ghost is a truly sacerdotal and apostolic devotion, as

¹ Acts vi. 8, 10.

is suggested by the words of St. Paul: "Let us exhibit ourselves as the ministers of God in much patience, . . . in chastity, . . . in long-suffering," and, as he adds lastly, "in the Holy Ghost".¹

In the second place, he who does not belong to the hierarchy can understand by what has been said how he should regard the authorities of the Church and all the members of the teaching body. We must regard them as the instruments of the Holy Ghost who speaks by their mouth, guides us by their means and imparts to us through them countless graces for the salvation of our souls. He who respects them and listens to them respects the authority of the Holy Ghost; he who despises them despises the Holy Ghost.

¹ 2 Cor. vi. 6.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE TEACHING-OFFICE OF THE CHURCH.

THE ecclesiastical hierarchy is, therefore, in an especial manner the work of the Holy Ghost. We must now look at this truth in detail, and consider in succession the various hierarchical offices.

The mission of the hierarchy of the Church is to lead men to everlasting life. This presupposes several powers, which reduce themselves to two principal ones, namely, Holy Order and Jurisdiction. The first of these consists in the power of representing other men in the worship of God, and of communicating to them, through the holy sacraments, the graces necessary for salvation. The second consists in the power to guide men to salvation by means of doctrine and laws.¹ The second of these powers is given by lawful mission; while the first is inherent in the priesthood.

Let us first consider the power of jurisdiction, or the pastoral-office, the first function of which is the proclamation of the true faith. Faith is the first condition of salvation. "He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and is the rewarder to them that seek Him," and "without faith it is impossible to please God".² Reason, knowledge and understanding are the first conditions of man's natural life, and, in like manner, faith is the first condition of his supernatural life. In order to possess God super-

¹ John x. 3, 9.

² Heb. xi. 6.

naturally man must know Him supernaturally; and this knowledge he has through faith. Thus faith is the first condition of salvation, the first and most indispensable act of homage which man owes to God, and the foundation of all our intercourse with Him.¹ Consequently, to teach the faith and bring "into captivity every understanding unto the obedience" of the faith² is the first and most important office of the Church. Our Lord, sent by the Father, is the Author and Finisher of the faith,³ but He communicated His authority to the Church, and with it gave to her the mission to preach the faith. This divine authority to teach is called the teaching-office of the Church. We must, therefore, now try to see what a close relation there exists between the Holy Ghost and this office: (1) as regards the source of the faith; (2) as regards the representatives of the teaching authority of the Church; and (3) as regards the various ways in which the Church exercises her office as teacher.

1. Faith, as we understand it here, is the sum of the truths revealed by God, which we must hold without doubt on the strength of God's word, and because He has revealed them. The object of faith is not, therefore, a truth which we have discovered for ourselves, but a truth which has been proposed to us. Man of himself can never know God in His supernatural relation to us. For this it is indispensable that God should graciously condescend to reveal Himself to us.⁴ He has done this. He has spoken and revealed to us a determinate number of truths and facts about Himself, first in the primitive revelation, then through the prophets of the Old Testament, and, finally, in the New Testament through our Saviour. The treasury of faith was closed and sealed by the works and teaching of the Divine Redeemer

¹ Heb. xi. 1.² 2 Cor. x. 5.³ Heb. xii. 2.⁴ Rom. x. 20.

and His Apostles, and is contained in Tradition and Scripture, which are the sources whence the Church draws the truths which she proposes to our belief. Let us now examine the relation of the Holy Ghost to these two sources of faith.

By Holy Scripture we understand the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments. The chief thing which we have to believe about these is that they are inspired and divine writings. Inspiration is usually understood to mean that God, with the intention of communicating His divine thoughts by the medium of a writer, moved him to write, directed him while carrying out his work and guarded him from error. In this way nothing false or inexact could slip in, for he was nothing but the medium of expressing that which God desires men to accept as His word. The books are, therefore, of divine origin, and are, in fact, as St. Augustine says, a letter or message from God to men. This was the firm belief of the chosen people of the Old Testament; and the same faith is held by the Catholic Church. To whom, then, is this inspiration to be attributed? To the Holy Ghost. Of Him is it said that "He spake by the prophets". The Council of Trent and the Vatican Council both insist on God being the Author of the sacred books, and on their being dictated by the Holy Ghost; ¹ and the Fathers of the Church use similar expressions. St. Augustine calls Scripture a writing penned by the Holy Ghost.² St. Chrysostom says explicitly that its books were dictated by the Spirit, and that nothing in them is useless.³ St. Gregory the Great, speaking of the author of the Book of Job, says that the Holy Ghost inspired him to write it, and that, in fact, He Himself wrote it.⁴ St. Peter

¹ *Conc. Trid.*, Sess. iv., *Dec. de can. Scrip.*; *Conc. Vat.*, Sess. i., iii., *Cons. de fid Cath.*, c. 2.

² *Conf.*, vii., 27. ³ *Hom. in Io.*, 36, n. 1. ⁴ *In Job, pr.*, c. 2 (*vet.*).

writes thus: "Prophecy came not by the will of man at any time, but the holy men of God spoke inspired by the Holy Ghost".¹

The second source of faith is Tradition. By tradition we understand both the sum of divine doctrine and the ordinances of God which are either not at all contained in Scripture or are contained therein in an incomplete form, and the manner by which these truths are conveyed to us—namely, not by writing, but by oral teaching. Tradition is guarded and communicated to us by the infallible teaching-office of the Church, which, by its light, interprets obscure passages of Scripture. This source of faith is the higher and more important of the two, in so far that it was there first, to reveal and preserve the faith, for Scripture followed later. Besides, tradition contains more than Scripture, which does not give explicit teaching about all the truths of faith, being, for example, insufficient in what concerns its own authority or the inspiration of its various books, etc. Moreover, tradition alone teaches the sense of Scripture with certitude; for the sacred writings are often very obscure, and by their want of plainness give occasion to the danger of false interpretations. Tradition is not derived from Scripture, and does not depend upon it; rather, Scripture comes from tradition and could not stand without it.

Whose work is this living consciousness of the truths of faith which the Church possesses? Again, it is the work of the Holy Ghost. This is His mission, and for this did our Lord give Him to the Church. "He shall abide with you for ever. . . . He will be in you. . . . He will teach you all things. . . . He will teach you all truth."² These words declare plainly that the Church has a living Teacher, who teaches without ceasing the whole unadulterated

¹ 2 Pet. i. 21.

² John xiv. 16, 17, 26; xvi. 13.

truth in such a manner that all we have to do is to abide in Him. The light which illuminates the Church, the voice which speaks through her, are the light and the voice of the Holy Ghost. He who taught the Apostles and led them to all truth still abides in the Church; and the union of the Holy Ghost with the Church is the fundamental mystery of her existence.

2. Who, then, are charged with the teaching-office? They are the same of whom we spoke in the last meditation, the representatives of the hierarchy of the Church: first the Pope, then the bishops in union with him, and after them the priests whom they send. To the Apostles and their successors alone did our Lord say: "Going, teach ye all nations . . . to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. . . . He that believeth not shall be condemned."¹ To Peter He said: "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not."² The Apostles, therefore, were the body appointed to guard and to administer the deposit of faith bequeathed to the Church. They always regarded themselves as called on to preach the faith in the name of Jesus Christ, and to act as His messengers to men.³ It never occurred to them, either in Jerusalem, Athens or Rome, to ask for an authorisation to preach either from the Sanhedrim, Areopagus or Senate; and when forbidden to preach, their unhesitating reply was: "We ought to obey God rather than men."⁴ They were fully conscious of their mission, and affirmed and attested the divine word in the same way that our Lord had done; and if they quoted Scripture, they did so, not as a proof of their doctrine, but rather as an explanation and completion of their own words. When death had emptied the ranks of the Apostles the Catholic Episcopate

¹ Matt. xxviii. 19, 20; Mark xvi. 16.

³ 2 Cor. v. 20.

² Luke xxii. 32.

⁴ Acts v. 29.

stepped forward collectively to form the apostolic college, and to fill the place of the Apostles with the same fulness and authority which they had possessed.

These, therefore, are the lawful representatives of the Church's teaching-office, and we have now to consider in what relation they stand to the Holy Ghost. They are simply His organs and His voice in all matters of faith and morals. The Holy Ghost speaks through them with divine infallibility, and, therefore, they cannot err when they speak officially as teachers to the whole Church. Consequently, the infallible and divine voice of the Holy Ghost re-echoes in the unanimous testimony borne by the Fathers and Doctors of all ages, and in the decrees of General Councils. These last definitions are the highest and most solemn utterances of the teaching-office, and whenever—since the time of the Apostles—they have been given forth, they must be ascribed in an especial manner to the Holy Ghost. The words which prefaced the decree of the first council held were: "It hath seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us".¹ Finally, the voice of the Holy Ghost resounds in the decrees of the Pope even if given without the explicit consent of the Episcopate, when he, as Supreme Doctor of the Church, makes an official pronouncement concerning faith or morals.² In such a case he is infallible, and his voice is the voice of the Holy Ghost, because he is the Supreme Head of the Church, and, as such, embraces in himself the privileges of all the members. How could he be a fitting head of the Church if he did not possess as much as the Church herself? And how could he fittingly represent Jesus Christ, the invisible Head, if he did not, through the operation of the Holy Ghost, share in the infallibility of the Head?

In all these cases it is, therefore, the Holy Ghost

¹ Acts xv. 28.

² *Conc. Vatic.*, Sess. iv., c. 4.

who speaks through the Church: the words are the words of man, but the voice is the voice of God. It follows that the Church is infallible not only in fact, but by nature, so that she cannot lose the divine truth. Error and lies are equally powerless against her. Were it otherwise, we should be compelled to deny the eternity of truth and the union of the Holy Ghost with the Church as a teacher of truth. The doctrine of the Church is not only true, but cannot be anything but true. She has often had to reform the morals of her children, but she has never had to reform her doctrine relating to faith or morals. This is no more needed than the reforming of truth itself. She does not depend on individuals, she exists by herself through her union with her invisible Head, and through the presence of the Holy Ghost. She is really a divine creation, dependent on the divine will. She is in fact a sacrament of truth, independent both of those who administer it and those who receive it. Who would undertake to reform her? "If the salt lose its savour wherewith will you season it?"¹ In the Church everything is divine—not only the source of truth, but also the channels by which it is dispensed to us. They are men, but their vocation is divine and is divinely maintained. Everything is arranged in a way worthy of God, who orders all things with strength and sweetness.

3. Let us now consider how the Holy Ghost works through the teaching-office of the Church as regards faith. The first and most important of His operations is the guardianship and extension of the faith in such a manner that the whole world may be enlightened by it. This, as we have already seen, was the mission especially confided by our Lord to the Apostles: "You shall be witnesses of Me," said He,

¹ Mark ix. 49.

“in Jerusalem and in all Judea”.¹ And speaking of themselves they said: “We are witnesses of all things that Jesus did”.² This is the object which the Church in her teaching-office has constantly in view, whether she looks at it in the light of Scripture or of Tradition, whether it be pronounced by decree of Council or by definition of Pope. This is the first and most necessary part of her mission. Man wants truth before all else. It is the light of his soul, and as long as it exists will give light and bear fruit. This, then, is the work of the Holy Ghost in the Apostles and their successors, whose light has gone forth into all the world.³ Our Lord says of the Holy Ghost: “He shall give testimony of Me.⁴ . . . He will convince the world of sin and of justice and of judgment.”⁵

The second operation of the Holy Ghost is the defence of the faith. It is foretold of the Church that “there must be heresies”.⁶ The Church, being one in faith, and being destined to spread it, it is inevitable that the Enemy should seek to overthrow her, the instruments used by him being heresies, misrepresentations, perversions and distortions of the truth, all of which spring up from time to time. What does the Holy Ghost do then? He defends the deposit of faith by calling together the assembly of the representatives of the Church’s teaching-office to bear witness to the faith, to define the doctrine of the Church and pronounce judgment. Thus heresy is condemned and struck by the sword of the Spirit,⁷ and is, in a word, separated from the living body of the Church. Furthermore, the Holy Ghost raises up learned and enlightened men in the Church who prove the justice of her decisions and show how unjustifiable and untenable is the attack, and bring

¹ Acts i. 8.² Acts x. 39.³ Ps. xviii. 5.⁴ John xv. 26.⁵ John xvi. 8.⁶ I Cor. xi. 19.⁷ Eph. vi. 17.

forward convincing arguments as to the complete accordance of the Church's decisions with both revelation and reason. The intervention of the Holy Ghost in this respect has given to the Church a number of learned writings in proof of the possibility, probability, utility, necessity and reality of divine revelation. The works of these defenders of Christianity extend from the days of Justin Martyr down to the present time, and form, as it were, a colossal stronghold built up by the Holy Ghost against unbelief, error and the madness of pride. The Catholic Church "is as the tower of David, which is built with bulwarks: a thousand bucklers hang upon it, all the armour of valiant men".¹

The third operation of the Holy Ghost in connection with the Church is to be seen in the wisdom of its government and in its development. Occasion for His intervention is given primarily by the errors and unbelief of the enemies of the true faith, which compel the Church to express the articles of her belief in precise and definite language. The nineteen General Councils are an illustration of this continued operation of the Holy Ghost, for by them the truths of faith have been ever more precisely and perfectly determined and expounded. Let us, for example, compare the various ways in which the Apostles', Nicene and Athanasian Creeds expound the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity and Incarnation. Could a more wonderful development of these doctrines be found? To this gift of defining dogma with precision, the Holy Ghost has added to the Church the gift of the science of faith. Not content with inspiring her to defend and maintain revealed truths, He has moved her to teach these same truths by given methods, by presenting them for belief in a reasonable manner, by proving their interdepend-

¹ Cant. iv. 4.

ence, by deducing the one from the other, by strengthening one by the other, by removing all apparent contradictions, by examining the principles on which the truths of faith rest, and by explaining them as far as is possible by the light of reason, so that they may be better grasped and understood. This ecclesiastical science is the creation of the most profound intellects and most learned schools, dating from the eleventh century. It will always remain to us as a monument of the noblest work of the human mind, equally admirable as regards the writings on which it is based and the intellectual powers which created it in such a manner as to be invincible because of its unity and cohesion and self-consistency. Nothing can resist either the methods or the effects of this science. So long as this bulwark of the faith exists, it is impossible for doubt, error or unbelief to overcome Catholic truth, for by it even natural truths are safeguarded and promoted. Through her science the Church becomes mistress of all truth and teacher of all knowledge. She converts all things to her service, by ennobling them and using them for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. Thus, in this way also, the Holy Ghost guides the Church in all truth, and proves His abiding presence in her by the progress she is continually making. No apostate church could point to such growth. Not only have heresies evinced no progress, but they have fallen into actual inconsistencies and contradictions of what they at one time professed and taught. Progress in Christian science belongs to the Church alone.

A very important instrument for the development of faith are the so-called devotions, provided they be recognised by the Church and adopted for her worship. They always have for their object some truth of faith, which, through Christian piety, enters into the life of the Church and takes a practical form ;

and they, in their turn, offer to the Church those fruits of salvation of which they are the principle. Such devotions are the work of the Holy Ghost, and their rise and evolution is one of the many proofs of His perpetual and living union with the Church and unceasing action in her. They are a means of the development of the deposit of faith, by their direction of the attention, love and adoration of the faithful now to this and now to that dogma, whereby it produces more abundant fruit. Learned men, moreover, take this or that object of devotion as the subject of their inquiries, bring to light the depths and beauties inherent in it, and show its connection with the remainder of the faith; and thus the field of Christian science is enlarged both in theory and practice. The fulness, variety and beauty with which the Holy Ghost endows the Church passes all description. He entices men to the practice of piety by means of devotions which give it new life and attractions, and inundate the Church with fresh streams of grace. In this treasury each individual can find what best appeals to himself and what carries with it grace under the most attractive form.

The results to be drawn from what has been said are, first, a great reverence towards the Holy Ghost, and, secondly, a similar reverence towards the representatives of the Church's teaching-office. Seeing that the Holy Ghost unites Himself to them in such an essential and interior manner our reverence is due to them as well as to Him. He is not only the cause but, in a sense, the object of this reverence, in so far as He belongs essentially to the Church and to her teaching-office.

Secondly, these considerations should give us a great reliance on the faith, for we have seen how many methods are used for the preservation of its deposit. God watches over it, and never loses the

thread by which it is communicated to us. The Holy Ghost is not only the Principle of Catholic truth, but is also its Protector, Propagator and Preserver. For us, therefore, there can be no question of corruption of faith. Thanks to the Holy Ghost, who teaches our pastors even as He taught the Apostles, we are one with the Church of the first ages, nay more, we are still living members of the original Church of Christ.

Finally, let us thank the Holy Ghost for keeping us in the true faith. He is the Author of Holy Scripture; and what benefits does He not confer on us through it! The Scriptures enlighten us by proving to us that the Church teaches the truth; they edify us by presenting to us the noblest examples of virtue and perfection; they strengthen and console us because, as St. Paul says, "What things soever were written were written for our learning, that through patience and comfort of the Scriptures we might have hope".¹ In all ages they have been a source of consolation to the Church in persecution,² for they have held out to her a speedy and glorious end to the sufferings of this life. A wonderful and divine life is latent in every word of Holy Scripture. The words: "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it,"³ gave to the Church her martyrs; again: "If thou wilt be perfect go sell what thou hast and give to the poor, and come follow Me,"⁴ founded the religious orders; and: "What you did to one of these My least brethren you did it to Me,"⁵ are still inspiring the most heroic works of spiritual and corporal mercy. And that nothing may be wanting, the Holy Ghost Himself explains and expounds Holy Scripture through the teaching-office of the Church, appointed

¹ Rom. xv. 4.

² 1 Macc. xii. 9.

³ Luke ix. 24.

⁴ Matt. xix. 21.

⁵ Matt. xxv. 40.

by Him, sent by Him, and endowed by Him with the gift of infallibility.

Above all things let us remember what a blessed thing it is to be in the possession of the true faith, and what a happiness it is to be a child of the Catholic Church, living under the personal guidance of the Holy Ghost. So long as we listen to the voice of the Church we may be free from all fear of wandering away from the path of salvation. Nothing can be more important to us than this. What need have we of anything else? Look round in spirit at the lands of the earth. How many millions still sit in the shadow of unbelief, no ray of revelation having yet reached them! How many countries there are which once possessed the blessing of faith, and are now deprived of the light of the Church, and retain nothing but the empty name and externals of Christianity? Look round at your own country and your immediate surroundings. How very close to you that destructive schism passed which tore even your own brethren from the living unity of the Church, and delivered them over to the calamities, storms and passions of error! To whom do you owe it that you were born precisely as you were, in this particular age, and of your particular parents? You owe it solely to the love and goodness of the Holy Ghost. He cast His eye on you, turned His heart to you, and of His great love gave you a priceless treasure, namely, the happiness, honour and privilege of being a child of the Catholic Church.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE PASTORAL-OFFICE OF THE CHURCH.

THE pastoral authority of the Church embraces, as we remarked before, a twofold power, namely, that of feeding the flock and that of leading it. It feeds the flock, or the faithful, by imparting to them true doctrine, and this belongs to the teaching-office of the Church; and it leads the flock by the establishment of laws and ordinances, and this is the work of the pastoral-office in the narrower sense of the word. As regards this office, let us consider: (1) in what it consists and what is its domain; and (2) who are its representatives. These two considerations will lead us to see what an active part the Holy Ghost takes in this office of the Church.

1. What, then, are we to understand by the pastoral-office of the Church? In the narrower sense of the word we are to understand the power of leading the faithful along the road to everlasting life by laws and ordinances established by the Church herself, or, in a word, the power of instituting whatever conduces to the common welfare of the Church. It is well to remark that this legislative authority of the Church does not consist in prescribing laws already laid down by our Lord Himself. That would not be giving a law, but only promulgating it, and would, therefore, be included in the teaching-office. The work of the pastoral-office is rather the making of new laws, by which the divine law is determined, the way of its observation marked out, and provision made for

eventual needs and circumstances. The pastoral authority is, therefore, an essentially legislative authority. It especially includes the right to appoint to ecclesiastical offices, to make regulations as to the mode and manner in which the sacraments are to be administered and received, and the public worship of God to be conducted. Furthermore, it has the right to appoint feasts, fasts and other penances, and to punish with ecclesiastical penalties the non-observance of the Church's laws as well as of the divine laws. Again, it is in its power to remove such penalties, and to dispense from or commute vows. Finally, it has the power to grant indulgences and other spiritual favours.

The Church possesses this power. It was given to her—as we saw in the twelfth chapter—by our Lord Jesus Christ, as is proved by the words which He spoke to the Apostles: "Whatsoever you shall bind upon earth shall be bound also in heaven; and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth shall be loosed also in heaven".¹ The Apostles made a practical use of this power at the first Council of Jerusalem, by declaring the old ceremonial to be superseded, while they confined themselves to the imposition of a few ecclesiastical precepts.² We find in the same chapter of the Acts that "Paul went through Syria and Cilicia confirming the churches; commanding them to keep the precepts of the Apostles and the ancients".³ St. Paul, in his epistles, makes frequent mention of this authority, and draws a clear distinction between the precepts which came from Christ and those which he had given on his own authority.⁴ He also exercised the apostolical power of imposing penalties.⁵

This power can be denied to the Church all the

¹ Matt. xviii. 18.

² Acts xv. 28.

³ Acts xv. 41.

⁴ 1 Cor. vii. 12.

⁵ 1 Cor. v. 3.

less because it was also exercised by the Synagogue, in that it instituted new feasts,¹ and inflicted punishments and penalties. Every State, every society has a similar right: and how much more should such a right be conceded to the Church which is a perfect society, and not, like the Church of the Old Testament, a provisional institution holding sway over a very limited area? The Catholic Church is founded for all ages and all nations; her legislation extends to the whole world, and could not, therefore, be limited to the first exercise of it. Moreover, it is but fitting that the ecclesiastical authority should, as far as is possible, possess fulness of power, as the representative of our Lord Himself set to govern in His place. To do so it must be invested with a power reflecting in an impressive manner the plenitude of power which belongs to Christ Himself. It was quite in conformity with the gracious Providence of God that He should, once He had laid down what was essential, leave it to the living authority of the Church to determine all secondary points relating to her government.

In this pastoral-office of the Church we have, once more, a beautiful image of the Holy Ghost. It is, first of all, an image of His divine authority. Her laws are, at least indirectly, supernatural in their origin, their aim, and very often in their subject-matter. The Church promulgates them, and demands obedience to them in the name of the Holy Ghost. The laws proceed from Him, because, as we have seen, they are not laws decreed by Christ, but by the Church, with the object to expound our Lord's ordinances and to determine their observance more in detail. Consequently, the Holy Ghost is indirectly the Author of these laws, and their promulgation is an effect of His living action in the Church. Secondly, these laws manifest the goodness of the Holy Ghost.

¹ 1. Macc. iv. 59.

They are few—far fewer than those imposed by the State—and, for the most part, refer to offices and states of life not forced upon any one. Furthermore, the grace of the Holy Ghost makes the observance of these laws very easy. He it is who, by the law of love which He engraves on the heart of every Christian, inclines the mind to a humble and child-like obedience. The laws themselves are, moreover, a veritable benefit to us, because they determine the essential requirements of Christianity. They remove from our minds all uncertainty or doubt in matters of salvation; they insure the maintenance of peace, order and unity in the Church. Thirdly, the object of the pastoral-office is not only to lay on us the burden of laws and precepts, but it is also the principle of many favours to us, such, for instance, as flow from its power to release from vows, to dispense from fasts, to remove impediments to marriage, and especially from its power to grant indulgences. This last power consists in the right given to lawful pastors, by virtue of their pastoral authority, to remit temporal punishments outside the confessional, by applying to souls the treasury of merits acquired by Christ and the saints. All chief pastors, lawfully appointed, have this authority in varying degrees, even though they have not been ordained priests; for the pastoral-office is not necessarily attached to the priesthood. We see from what has been said the variety that there is in the ministries appointed by the Holy Ghost in the Church, and how each office is turned by Him into an inexhaustible source of graces and benefits, the refreshing influence of which extends to the whole organism of the Church. Consider how good it is for us to be members of the Catholic Church, and to live thus under the gentle rule of the Holy Ghost. Truly, "He hath not done in like manner to every

nation, and His judgments He hath not made manifest to them".¹

Lastly, the majesty of the Holy Ghost is revealed to us in the most magnificent manner by these laws. We know what terrible chastisements overtook despisers of these laws, such as Ananias, Saphira and Elymas,² and all others who contemned the pastoral authority and defied its punishments. There is no hero so renowned but by the anathema of the Church his laurels may be withered; there is no conqueror so victorious and mighty but by the anathema of the Church his weapons may be snatched from his hand; there is no throne so firmly established but by the anathema of the Church it may be shaken to its foundations like a mouldering ruin! To this day, when the voice of the Supreme Pontiff utters reproaches and protests from the Vatican, the world trembles and the mighty ones of the earth are troubled. This mysterious power is none other than the majesty of the Holy Ghost, who, indeed, is ever kind in granting benefits and gracious in forgiving the contrite sinner, but at the same time terrible when He chastises and punishes.

We can learn from these considerations how to regard the laws of the Church. The divine power of the Holy Ghost is their principle; and it is because of this that the faithful children of the Church consider every fraction of her precepts as holy and worthy of reverence.

2. Who are the representatives of the pastoral authority? A portion of this authority is delegated to every pastor of souls and lawfully appointed prelate, who, in his own proper sphere, exercises jurisdiction in the Church. But the fulness of the pastoral power, like that of the teaching-office, resides in the bishops and the Pope.

¹ Ps. cxlvii. 20.

² Acts xiii. 11.

The bishops are the ordained successors of the Apostles, to whom our Lord said: "Whatsoever you shall bind and loose upon earth shall be bound and loosed also in heaven".¹ The Apostles always regarded themselves as the holders of this power, and they transmitted it to the bishops whom they chose and appointed.² This, however, does not mean that the episcopal authority extends as far as that of the Apostles. Though these were subordinate to Peter, each of them received from our Lord the fulness of apostolic authority to found and govern churches; because their mission being extraordinary, it demanded equally extraordinary powers for them as teachers and pastors. But this fulness of apostolic power ceased with them, and did not pass on to their successors: the Apostles did not choose and appoint other apostles, but only bishops. Bishops, therefore, depend entirely on the Pope, and their authority is exercised only within the limits fixed by him, or in other words, in their own dioceses. But they are real successors to the Apostles as far as regards their episcopal office, which, as St. Paul says, is given to them by the Holy Ghost—by God Himself.³

As in the teaching-office, a Council of bishops in union with the Pope is, if not another representation, at least another expression of the supreme pastoral authority, and is the most important and solemn which exists. Councils are not assembled because it is necessary that the truth should be defined by the episcopal body, or that laws meant for the whole Church should be promulgated by it, for the power of the Pope suffices for that; but the bishops assemble in Council in order to secure every possible assurance and confidence to the faithful, to give more weight and solemnity to the decrees, and to give to the

¹ Matt. xviii. 18.

² Tit. i. 5.

³ Acts xx. 28.

whole world an admirable example of the unity and catholicity of the Church. No other action of the pastoral-office could, in the same degree as a General Council, manifest the majesty of the Holy Ghost who guides and governs the Church. It was upon this that the first Council of Jerusalem insisted most emphatically.¹

The Pope is the supreme head of the Church's pastoral-office. In him alone resides the fulness of the apostolic authority as it was given to St. Peter; for the apostolic authority was not given to Peter in the same way as it was given to the other Apostles, the power of the primacy being added to it quite distinct from the powers given to the remainder of the apostolic college; this is clearly proved by the words which record the promise and institution of the primacy.² This primacy must exist in the pastoral-office as it exists in the teaching-office; for how otherwise could the Church be a perfect body, that is to say, how could it fittingly represent the unity of the life of the body with its diversity of members? How could it be a faithful image of the real body of Christ, in which the Holy Ghost dwells in the fulness of His power, if one selected member did not stand in quite a peculiar relation to the Holy Ghost? Of course the Holy Ghost could, without an intermediary, enlighten the other members of the hierarchy and endow them directly with the fulness of the pastoral power. But in this manner their union with the Holy Ghost would not form them into one body, it would not be an organic union such as is most fitting to a human society. This last is possible only if one member be made the centre and living source of the Church's life, and that the Pope be, not only the summit, but also the root of the tree, and that all the pastors and faithful live and work

Acts xv. 28.

² Matt. xvi. 19; John xxi. 15.

through him, in living union with and in dependence on him. Thus the Pope, as it were, sums up in himself the whole of the Church in embryo. He is the living temple, the mouthpiece, the organ of the Holy Ghost, who through him pours forth life, strength and blessing on the Christian world. It is with much significance that Catholic art so often represents the Holy Ghost under the form of a dove hovering over the Chair of St. Peter.

What blessings has not the Holy Ghost given to us through the ministry of the Pope! To it we owe the whole action of the Church, and, we might say, the Church itself. First we owe to it the stability of the Church, because the Pope is her living foundation, from whom flow all other authority and power. To him, also, do we owe the marks and attributes of the Church, for the Pope is the visible sign of her unity; and he is also the bulwark of her sanctity and the guarantee of her apostolic constitution as she spreads herself all over the world in the course of ages. To the Pope, moreover, does the Church owe her activity, both exterior and interior. He it is who is always sending forth missionaries, and arming them for new conquests; he it is, also, who with truly pastoral care is for ever renewing her interior life. Wherever the authority of the papacy grows weak, there does spiritual life decay. The schismatical Churches which have severed themselves from the centre of unity are a standing proof of this. They have retained most of the means of grace left to the Church, yet where are the nations which they have converted since their apostasy? Where are the saints whom they have produced? Verily, their condition is like that of a highly adorned mummy!

We must, therefore, thank the Holy Ghost for the institution of the pastoral authority of the Church, and especially for the institution of the papal primacy.

What should we be without the papacy? Nay more, what would the whole world be without it? It would be a world without law and without faith, a world estranged from God, a world far worse than that of paganism and far more guilty. The mountains, it may be said, form the framework of the earth, and, by means of the streams they send down upon it, are, as it were, the principle of its fecundity, while they are the protection and the landmark of the valleys which nestle under their shelter. Such is the position of the papacy as regards the world. It stands as the rock of truth and faith, the principle of supernatural gifts, the promoter of civilisation, the invulnerable bulwark against human passions, the sign set up for the guidance of all who are seeking the way to their heavenly home. Truly, he who despises and refuses to listen to the voice of the Pope does not only sin against the Holy Ghost, but is guilty of the blackest ingratitude for that great proof of the Spirit's love for us, that blessing conferred upon the Church and the whole world, namely, the institution of the papacy.

CHAPTER XV.

THE PRIESTLY-OFFICE OF THE CHURCH.

OF all the powers given by Jesus Christ to His Church, that of the priesthood is the most exalted. Let us, therefore, consider : (1) what the priestly-office is; (2) in what way it is an especial work of the Holy Ghost; and (3) how the Holy Ghost communicates Himself to the individual actions of the priesthood.

1. What is the priestly authority? It is the divine authorisation to conduct the worship of God. Divine worship consists, first of all, in the offering of sacrifice; and also comprises the dispensing of grace by means of the holy sacraments. Sacerdotal authority consists, therefore, in the power of offering sacrifice and administering the sacraments. The priest, by virtue of this power, becomes the authorised intermediary between God and men. He is a true mediator. Through him men offer to God sacrifice, the highest tribute of their adoration, and, again, through him God dispenses graces to men. St. Paul says about the priesthood: "For every high-priest taken from among men is ordained for men in the things that appertain to God, that he may offer up gifts and sacrifices for sins".¹ "Let a man so account of us as the ministers of Christ and the dispensers of the mysteries of God."² The priesthood is nothing else than the renewal and continuation of the priest-

Heb. v. 1.

² 1 Cor. iv. 1.

hood of Christ, who by the Incarnation united substantially the divine and human natures, who in His human nature offered to God a perfect sacrifice, and who by communicating His grace and giving Himself united the whole of mankind into one Mystical Body with Him, to make them one family with Him in the bosom of God. Such is the essence of the Christian priesthood. Its end is to bring our Lord continually to this earth by the Holy Sacrifice, and to keep Him with us; to bring Him forth, as it were, in souls by the communication of grace by means of the sacraments, till He is there developed to full perfection.¹ This twofold power over the natural Body and mystical Body of Christ constitutes the authority of the priesthood, the second power proceeding from the first and completing it. Priests are our spiritual fathers, because they beget us in Christ, and because it is to them that we owe Him in the Holy Eucharist, the production and administration of which forms part of their office. Considering this, we must say that the priesthood is indeed a divine office, worthy of all honour, which, by making priests the depositaries and controllers of these supernatural powers, renders them objects of our veneration.

2. Now, from whichever side we may look at it, this priestly-office is in very truth a ministry of the Holy Ghost. Its divers functions are connected with prayer and the communication of grace; and, as we have so often seen, the Holy Ghost is the Spirit of holiness, grace and prayer, upon whom we depend for the oblation to God of a clean heart. By its origin and nature the priestly-office is the continuation of the priestly-office of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ was a priest, born a priest, a priest by nature, by His mission and by His whole exterior life; He preached, He instituted the sacraments, He offered the great

¹ Gal. iv. 19.

Sacrifice of Atonement, and was also the medium of grace. All His life was sacerdotal, and all His titles and all His authority are founded on His sacerdotal office and are consecrated by it. Now, as we have seen, Jesus Christ exercised His priestly-office only in the Holy Ghost and under His influence and guidance. The Holy Ghost is, as it were, the uncreated unction of Christ the High-Priest; and, as Christ possessed Him really and essentially, He willed that His visible representatives in the priesthood of the Church should also possess Him in a peculiar manner, and should exercise their ministry in Him. This communication of the Holy Ghost, and the participation in His authority constitute the supernatural essence, dignity and consecration of the Catholic priesthood. He alone appoints priests, and nothing but the communication of His power makes them priests. A priest's ordination does not merely give him an authorisation, but imparts to him an abiding virtue and fitness; this fitness consisting not only in a grace which helps him in the worthy exercise of his office, but also in a grace which enables him to discharge the same validly and effectually, in that it communicates to him the power of the Holy Ghost, who is the principal cause of the sacramental effects attached to the priestly ministry. This is expressed by the words by which the ordination of a priest is effected: "Receive the power of offering sacrifice for the living and the dead," and also: "Receive the Holy Ghost; whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained".¹ In a sense, the Holy Ghost Himself is the power in which the priest offers sacrifice and administers the sacraments. The character, or indelible mark, which is imprinted on the soul by ordination, and the graces which accompany a priest's vocation are simply the

¹ John xx. 23.

effect of the communication and presence of the Holy Ghost. Therefore, in the most profound sense of the word, the priesthood is an office of the Holy Ghost.¹

3. Let us now consider more closely in what manner the Holy Ghost reveals His share in the functions of the priesthood. These functions can be reduced to three: sacrifice, prayer and the administration of the sacraments.

The chief function of the priesthood—whence all others are derived—is the offering of sacrifice. By nature a sacrifice is the oblation, partial transmutation and destruction of a visible thing, which action has for its object the expression of man's acknowledgment of the supreme dominion of God. Thus, sacrifice is an act of the virtue of religion, or, rather, it is its highest and most sublime act, for by no other act of that virtue can the supreme dominion of God and the absolute dependence of man be expressed in such a striking, significant, comprehensive and glorious manner. This act is the soul and centre of the whole worship of God and a homage not to be rendered but to His divine majesty alone. In no other action does a priest appear greater as a mediator between God and man, than in offering sacrifice. This is true of every sacrifice, but how much more true of the Sacrifice of the New Covenant; for there Jesus Christ, God made Man, offers Himself in an unbloody manner under the appearances of bread and wine. He is at once the Victim and the invisible High-Priest; the priest is His visible representative, and, as such, really offers the sacrifice when he changes the bread and wine, by the words of consecration, into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. Thus does he perform a transcendent act by which he offers to God more than the whole world, more than the whole of creation, for he offers Him who in

¹ 2 Cor. iii. 8.

Himself comprises all the orders of grace and nature, even the Son of God. Thus does he render to God an honour and glory which are beyond all price.

By virtue of what power does the priest perform this marvel? By virtue of his ordination, which, as we have just said, is an operation of the Holy Ghost. Even as our Lord was conceived and formed in the pure womb of the Mother of God by the power of the Holy Ghost, even as He accomplished His great atoning Sacrifice, and rose from the grave with a new and immortal life by the same power, so is He every day born again in the Holy Mass and offered up by the power of the Holy Ghost which was given to the priest by the imposition of hands. The consecration of the bread and wine is an operation of the Holy Ghost in the same manner as was the Incarnation. The Holy Ghost turns the priest into His visible, effective and worthy instrument by means of his ordination and by the actual graces which He gives to him for the offering of the sacrifice. Thus, in fact, the Holy Ghost co-operates in the Sacrifice of the Mass, and, therefore, the Church calls Him the fire which is called down from heaven by the priest, and in which Christ, the Divine Victim, offers Himself a holocaust to God.¹ In all liturgical forms the priest earnestly invokes the aid of the Holy Ghost to perfect the sacrifice. In former days the close relation of the Holy Ghost to the sacrifice was expressed in a beautiful and significant way by the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament in a vessel in the shape of a dove, which was suspended over the altar. It is He, in fact, who gives us the Holy Eucharist, and He who reserves It in our churches.

Simple as is the Holy Sacrifice in its nature and essentials, it is surrounded by manifold and magnificent ritual observances. To the act of con-

¹ *Pontific. Rom. Consecr. alt.*

secration—scarcely perceptible to the senses—by which the sacrificial action, considered in its essence, is accomplished, there are joined a number of ceremonies, to the adornment of which every art and invention have subscribed. Sacrifice is an official and solemn act, the execution, so to speak, of a public deed, bearing evidence to a covenant between God and man; and the dignity of the two contracting parties—especially the dignity of God—requires that everything should be done to give it solemnity. This is the explanation of the gorgeous churches and cathedrals which have been built for the celebration of this act of worship, of the costly vessels and vestments which have been made for the service of the altar, of the multitude of the ministers in the sanctuary, and the splendour of the various ceremonies which are the explanatory accompaniment of the sacrifice, as well as of the beautiful prayers and chants of the liturgy, and the grandeur of the Church's music. Who is it who surrounds the Holy Sacrifice with all this external splendour? In the Old Testament—as we have seen—the Holy Ghost Himself taught the workmen how to make and adorn the Tabernacle; and how much more would He do so in the case of the living Tabernacle of the glorified Body of Jesus Christ? This connection of the Holy Ghost with the ceremonies of the Church is described in the various forms of benediction with which the Church consecrates temples, altars, vestments and vessels to the service of God in the Most Holy Sacrifice. In each case the Holy Spirit is invoked and besought to sanctify the sacred object with His abundant grace and make it worthy of the service of God. Catholics have the conviction that the Holy Ghost takes part in the ceremonies of the Church and that nothing of any importance is instituted without His direction.

The second part of a priest's ministry is prayer.

St. Paul mentions it not only as one of our Lord's high-priestly functions when "in the days of His flesh, with a strong cry and tears He offered prayers and supplications,"¹ but says, speaking of himself, that he carried out his apostolate with prayer and supplication.² Prayer, therefore, is an essential part of a priest's office as mediator, for, on one hand, it is an act of adoration, the soul of sacrifice, and thus in itself an act of divine worship, while, on the other hand, it is the most ordinary way by which we obtain the grace of God for ourselves and for others. It is in truth a golden ladder by which praise and adoration ascend to the throne of God and by which the divine mercy descends to us. This is why the Church has in the divine office regulated the number, times and forms of prayer, and has imposed its use upon priests under the severest penalties. It is easy to see the part taken by the Holy Ghost in this sacerdotal function. The prayers of the breviary are for the most part drawn from Scripture. The Church, therefore, makes use of the Holy Ghost's own words, and consequently He supplies the text of the prayers. As to the form and arrangement of these prayers, they are the work of the Church, or are, in other words, the work of the authority of the Holy Ghost. Finally, it is the Holy Spirit who assists both the Church and the priesthood in the punctuality, perseverance, zeal and reverence with which this obligation is carried out. He is the flame which kindles and keeps alive the fire of devotion in the hearts of priests, so that their prayer—pure and powerful—may ascend to the throne of God. The priest is the mouthpiece of the Church and of the world, but the Holy Ghost is their heart even as He is the eternal breathing of love in the bosom of the Ever Blessed Trinity.

¹ Heb. v. 7.

² Eph. i. 16; 1 Thess. i. 12 *sqq.*

Several benedictions are connected with the official prayer and sacrifice of the priesthood. Benediction is an act, an emanation of the sacerdotal power. To bless means to impart graces to men for the benefit of their souls or bodies. No one can, therefore, bless officially unless he represent God in an especial manner, and have received from Him especial authority to be the mediator of His gifts. A father can, consequently, give a blessing to his children, because he stands in God's place as the head of his family and is the representative of His authority. But a priest represents God in a far higher way, and no one but he can, in so powerful, effectual and abundant a manner, call down the blessing of God on man for his eternal and temporal welfare. This is why faithful Catholics are always anxious to obtain a priest's blessing for themselves and for all belonging to them. A mere glance at the formulas of the Church's benedictions will show us the good things of which they are the instruments. As the priestly-office and its authority to bless are an office of the Holy Ghost, it is easy to see how much we have to thank Him for.

The administering of the sacraments is the third function of the priesthood. The sacraments and the dispensing of them are a great and most excellent work of the Holy Ghost, as is easily seen, whether they are considered in themselves, in their effects, or in the manner in which they produce their effects. The holy sacraments are visible signs of grace, instituted by Jesus Christ, in order to effect inwardly that which they signify outwardly. As visible signs, made up of matter and form, they are simple, inanimate elements, words and signs which, in the hands of the Holy Ghost, become instruments of grace. We have elsewhere seen how the Holy Spirit employs inanimate and irrational creatures as symbols of His personal attributes and instruments of His benefits

to us. His goodness to us finds its highest expression in the holy sacraments. They are not merely the medium of benefits both spiritual and temporal, but are the channels and instruments of the greatest of all gifts, namely, the communication of sanctifying grace. Man unites in himself the spiritual and material creations, and by reason of his supernatural end stands in relation to the supernatural order. Furthermore, when God Incarnate took upon Himself the human nature, He took to Himself, as it were, the whole of the visible creation, and made Himself its Head. Thus it came to pass that even the irrational creation received the privilege and honour of a connection with the supernatural, and of becoming its instrument and medium to us. The grace of the Head passes through man on to the irrational creation. This supernatural gift is, as it were, a dowry bestowed on the lower creation by the union of the divine and human natures in Jesus Christ. Even as in paradise the tree of life and the natural propagation of the human species were intended to be mediums of supernatural blessings to man, much more was the transmission of such supernatural gifts through the medium of creatures to be continued after the Incarnation. Nowhere is this effected more excellently than by means of the holy sacraments. In them and by them the Holy Ghost consecrates the whole of creation—the material as well as the spiritual—to be His living temple, this being but the prelude to the wondrous transformation of the world which He will one day show forth.

As to the graces which the sacraments both signify and confer, it may be said that their general object is to make us like to Christ, to communicate to us His supernatural life, and, as it were, change us more and more into Him. Taken together, the sacraments form an organised system for our welfare, such that

nothing is wanting to us for the communication, preservation and development of the spiritual life. Hence it follows that the principal effect of the sacraments is the communication or increase of sanctifying grace, because sanctifying grace is the foundation and essential element of the supernatural life. The second effect of some of the sacraments is the imprinting of a so-called character, which is an indelible mark stamped on the soul by Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Order. This character gives a special spiritual likeness to the Person and prerogatives of Christ as the Son of God, as our High-Priest and as the Defender of the Kingdom of God. The character of Baptism makes us citizens of the kingdom of Christ, and gives us a right to all the possessions and privileges of the Church; the character of Confirmation makes us the soldiers of Christ, and imposes on us the duty of fighting for His interests; the character of Holy Order endows us with the authority necessary to function as the representative of the faithful in the Church's official worship of God. The sacramental character is by its nature a real, permanent and spiritual quality of the soul which in very truth raises, equips and enriches us, in the same way that our adoption as the children of God does not constitute a merely spiritual relation to Him, but has its real foundation in the sanctifying grace which abides in us. Yet the sacramental character is not grace itself, for it remains even when grace is lost; but it has an effect on grace, which it raises to a new dignity, and surrounds with a greater splendour. It moreover contributes to the preservation or recovery of grace, for on account of it man receives what are called actual graces more easily. The third effect of the sacraments is the communication and increase of all supernatural gifts and virtues, which have their root in sanctifying grace and are its

accompaniment. The fourth effect consists in the special actual graces which are generally necessary to our salvation and particularly necessary to the conditions of our individual state, which latter we call the graces of vocation. Finally, the greatest of all the effects of the sacraments is, as we shall see in the sequel, their communication of the Holy Ghost, who is the Author of all supernatural gifts.

The excellence of the sacraments is revealed no less clearly by the manner in which they produce their effects. In the first place these effects of grace follow certain fixed and unalterable laws, in which there is reflected God's independence of those who administer and those who receive the sacraments. Of the latter, strictly speaking, the only condition required is that he who receives a sacrament put no obstacle in the way. His actions are not the cause of the effects of grace, but are only a condition and preparation. It is God who works in the sacraments, and that is enough. Further, the sacraments confer grace by a divine power and operation. They are the co-operative causes of the dispensation of grace, the real and powerful instruments of which God makes use to confer grace on us, whether it be that they constitute merely acts accomplished in the name of Jesus Christ which, by virtue of their institution by Him and by His merits, are infallible causes of grace, or whether it be that they are the organs which actually contribute to produce grace in our souls. In a word, the sacraments help to produce, by a divine power, effects which far surpass the power and efficacy of natural causes. The sacraments are, therefore, the highest point to which the power of irrational creatures can be raised, and the most wonderful proof of the goodness of the Holy Ghost towards them and towards us. Lastly, the sacraments confer grace in a perfect and instantaneous manner, and

with an inexhaustible abundance and tender adaptation to all states, to all times, and to all the circumstances of the spiritual life, so much so that in certain cases one sacrament supplies for another or completes its effect. For instance, the Holy Eucharist can, according to the opinion of grave theologians, in a certain sense, work the effect of Penance. Extreme Unction perfects the expiatory power of the other sacraments, and Penance and Extreme Unction by their quickening power revive the dead merits, the ruin of which was involved in the interruption and destruction of the life of grace by mortal sin.

These considerations are sufficient to show us how beautiful, moving and divine the sacraments are. And to whom do we owe them? Their institution and effects are due to Christ and to the Holy Ghost. The proximate object of the sacrifice is to do honour to God, and the proximate end of the sacraments is to be means of grace to man. As such they belong peculiarly to the Holy Ghost who is the Source, Principle and Lord of the life of grace. Thus the holy sacraments are, as it were, the abiding law, the instruments and channels through which the Holy Ghost ceaselessly pours the waters of grace, and together with grace Himself, through the Church on to the world and on to man. It is His power which forgives sin by Penance and Extreme Unction, which by Confirmation and Holy Order makes the recipients to be either the soldiers of Christ or the associates of His priesthood. He it is who consecrates the real Body and Blood of our Lord in the Holy Eucharist, and who, by the manifold graces dispensed by the sacraments, embraces all life, all times, all conditions and all circumstances, in order to lead us along the way of holiness with wonderful providence.

Food, strength and assistance at the hour of death are necessities common to all states of life. The

Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Extreme Unction meet these necessities. Further, the Church divides itself into two great portions—those who undertake the physical, and those who undertake the spiritual, propagation of the Church. Holy Order and Matrimony sanctify these two states. Many, indeed most probably the majority of men, have the misfortune to lose their baptismal grace by falling into sin; but the Sacrament of Penance restores them to the life of grace. Even the excellence of the sacramental character is the work of the Holy Ghost, and is therefore called, in the language of the Church, “the seal of the Holy Ghost”. Thus, the whole Church, both in her exterior and in her interior life, is filled with the glory and bounty of the Holy Ghost, and is as a garden of God planted in the midst of the wilderness of this life. A number of heavenly fountains systematically irrigate this garden, each fountain spreading beauty and fecundity around it. Who can understand all that the sacraments do for the Church and the world? Who can tell how many sins they obliterate; how many punishments they avert; what a fulness of supernatural life and sanctity they generate; how much supernatural virtue they implant; how many merits they cause to be gained for eternal life; how many sorrows they assuage and console, and with how many joys they replace them? In truth the face of the earth is renewed by them, and even heaven owes its glories to their efficacy.

Thus, the priestly-office of the Church reveals in a magnificent way the power and goodness of the Holy Ghost, His close union with the Church, and His efficacious presence in her. What would she be without sacrifice and sacraments? Give a look at the so-called Protestant Churches. How strange, how barren, how dreary they seem! We can find no trace

of any Christian mystery except Baptism. Yes, children of God are indeed born there; but there is no holy table at which they can be fed and fortified; and if they lose their supernatural life of grace there is no one to restore it to them. In vain may their souls long for the presence of God in the tabernacle; they have to say with Magdalen: "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him". Oh, how happy are we to be children of the Church! For us the table of the Lord is always spread; every day, and many times every day, the Lamb of God is slain for us; ceaselessly does the grace of the Holy Ghost flow from the hands and lips of the bishops and priests of the Church, so that our souls may be cleansed, fortified and united to Jesus Christ, the Bridegroom of the Church. Verily, we may say literally that we revel in the favours of God!

And what an honour it is for us that the Holy Ghost should call our sons and brothers to the priesthood, and should make them the mediators and organs of His supernatural gifts! What a glory for us to be thus associated with His divine mission of saving souls and giving salvation to the world! After God we really owe heaven to men! How glorious and divine is this plan of God's wisdom and goodness!

Let us then thank the Holy Ghost with all our hearts for the countless benefits which we receive through the Catholic priesthood, and let us love and honour the representatives of His power and goodness to us! Let us reverence the holy sacraments, which by their sublimity, infallibility, power and variety, and by the inexhaustibleness of their effects are such wondrous images of the Holy Ghost. Nothing—not even our negligence and irreverence—can exhaust them. They are our consolation and source of confidence both in life and in death.

CHAPTER XVI.

HOLY BAPTISM.

WE must now consider some of the sacraments in greater detail. The first of them is Holy Baptism, regarding which we have to consider: (1) its signification; and (2) the relation in which it stands to the Holy Ghost.

1. In His reply to Nicodemus's inquiries about eternal salvation, our Blessed Lord said: "Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God".¹ These words disclose the importance of Baptism in the scheme of salvation. By it man is born to a supernatural life. In this lies the essence of Baptism; everything else is a development of it, and leads back to it.

By his natural birth man is—as our Lord remarks in the same passage—only flesh,² that is to say, only a natural being, and, as far as the supernatural life is concerned, dead or non-existent. This spiritual death is no negative, innocent absence of life, but is a state of guilt in God's eyes, of real sin, namely, original sin, carrying with it condemnation and servitude to Satan. Under these circumstances a spiritual regeneration which will blot out sin, break the dominion of Satan, and at the same time give a new and real life, becomes a necessity. This new birth is the effect of Baptism. It effaces all sin, gives us a

¹ John iii. 5.

² John iii. 6.

higher nature with the aptitude requisite for leading a supernatural life, and, by sanctifying grace, gives the supernatural life itself.

This idea of a spiritual new birth makes it easy for us to understand what is the essence of Holy Baptism. We can at once see why water, among all the elements, was chosen as its matter. Water is the principle of fecundity; without water there is no life. It is the origin of everything, even of the heavens and the earth.¹ The action performed by means of water is, as is expressed by the sacramental words, an ablution, which signifies that Baptism frees the soul from the stains of sin. As to the effects of Baptism, they are, first, the entire blotting out of sin; secondly, the remission of all punishment; thirdly, the communication of sanctifying grace, and at the same time of all supernatural virtues and gifts; fourthly, the stamping the soul with the indelible mark of Christianity. From the waters of Baptism there comes forth a new creature, free, living and sanctified, endowed with the germs of, and the predisposition for, the supernatural life, and with a title to honour, power and beatitude such as only a creature beloved of God can have. The Christian comes forth from Baptism the child of God and of the Church, the brother of Jesus Christ and heir of heaven!

Even the preliminary ceremonies of Baptism signify the twofold character of its effects. First, there is the solemn exorcism, and the renunciation on the part of the catechumen of the works of Satan, which is, at once, a true testimony to the reality of original sin and to that of the dominion of the devil. Then there follow certain symbolical actions performed on the person of the catechumen, such as the insufflation, the unction of his ears, nose, breast and shoulders, and

¹ Gen. i. 2.

the placing of salt on his tongue. These ceremonies signify the awakening of his senses and powers, their preparation and adaption for the supernatural life, for the understanding and confession of the truths of faith, for strength and endurance in the warfare against the spirits of evil, and for perseverance under the yoke of the commandments of God and of the Church. Even the name of a saint which is given to the catechumen in Baptism and the presence of his baptismal sponsors indicate that he is now beginning a new life, or rather that he has begun to live in the supernatural order for the first time, and therefore receives a new name and enters a new family and new country. Even as the natural birth makes us members of a certain family and certain state, so by Baptism do we enter the great family of God and of the saints, and become members of the visible Church. Such, in all its simplicity and sublimity, is the meaning of Holy Baptism. By it we are born to a supernatural life, and become children of God and the Church. Everything belonging to Baptism—its matter, its ceremonies, its form and effects—is the expression of this one simple idea, this one glorious truth.

2. Now what relation has the Holy Ghost to Baptism? Baptism is the beginning, the principle of man's supernatural life, and is therefore most truly the work of the Holy Ghost; and we find His image and operation in every ceremony pertaining to the sacrament.

The promise of Baptism refers explicitly to the Holy Ghost, as is to be seen plainly in our Lord's discourse with Nicodemus. It is of the Holy Spirit that we are born to eternal life, thus, in a certain sense, to become spirit. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Baptism gives us both sanctifying grace and

the Holy Ghost Himself, and thus a spiritual life is communicated to us. Our Lord's words imply that the grace of Baptism is an especial favour of the Holy Ghost, for He says: "the Spirit breathes where He will".¹

At the Baptism of Christ—which is the type of Christian Baptism—the Holy Ghost appeared under the visible form of a dove, and descended upon our Lord. That was the sign by which John was enabled to recognise the Messiah,² and know that, whereas he himself baptised with water only, the Divine Redeemer would baptise with the Holy Ghost.³ It follows that Baptism has an essential relation to the Holy Ghost. This is made even more plain by the ceremonies themselves. Everything which is used in them—oil, salt, and especially water, as well as the actions of insufflation and imposition of hands and the exorcisms—is a symbol of the Holy Ghost. The form of the rite of Baptism makes explicit mention of the Holy Ghost, and shows that we are baptised in His name and by His power. Finally, Baptism has not only the effect of cleansing and sanctifying our souls, and of making us the children of God by sanctifying grace and the infusion of supernatural virtues and gifts, but also gives the Holy Ghost Himself to us. Thus not only do we become members of the Church, the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, but also living temples of the Holy Ghost; and if we are the members of Christ it is because the same Spirit dwells in us who dwells in Him. Thus the Holy Ghost descends on every one who is baptised as He descended on our Lord and on the waters of the Jordan; and every sanctified soul comes out of the waters of Baptism full, as was our Lord Jesus Christ, of the Holy Ghost.⁴ Hence

¹ John iii. 5, 6, 8.

² Mark i. 8.

³ John i. 33.

⁴ Luke iv. 1.

the early Christians used to depict themselves and our Lord under the figure of a fish. Water is the element which gives life to a fish, and the water of Baptism is the element which gives life to a Christian. "We are," says Tertullian, "fishes like Christ; we are born in water, and water is necessary to our life."¹ The invocation of the Holy Ghost is the most solemn part of the blessing of the font on Holy Saturday. The Paschal candle, which has already been blessed, is dipped in the water, while the priest prays that the Holy Ghost may descend with His power into the font and make it the instrument of regeneration. Everything in the ceremony—the lighted candle, the insufflation, the chrism—reminds us of the Holy Ghost; and Christian art has in all ages decorated the baptistery and the font with symbols of the Spirit. Holy Baptism is therefore the blessed vehicle of the Holy Ghost, it is the shining cloud in which He descends on the Church, and from which the voice of the Father unceasingly resounds, saying: "This is My beloved Son"; it is, as it were, the luminous sea whence rise the countless generations of hallowed souls who people heaven.

In conclusion let us make the following considerations. Holy Baptism is the greatest of all blessings which we can receive. When we come, later, to consider sanctifying grace, we shall see what great and glorious things are involved in this sacrament. It is by it that we first receive sanctifying grace; and the administration of Baptism is, therefore, an event so important and sublime that it would be fitting that every bell in Christendom should ring in celebration of the Baptism of every Christian child. That child has been made a child of God, a prince of heaven; he has not been born after the laws of nature or by the will of man, but by the mercy of God. We do

¹ *De Bapt.*, c. 1.

not come into the world Christians, but are made Christians by the grace of the Holy Ghost. "Of His own will hath He begotten us by the word of truth."¹ The Holy Spirit breathes where He will, and does not breathe either in all places or at all times; but it has been His will to make us children of God and of the Church. Let us never forget this priceless grace, and let us always keep the anniversary of our Baptism with great joy and gratitude to the Holy Ghost. That was our real birthday, the day when our souls were consecrated to be temples of the Holy Ghost. On that day we received a name in the kingdom of God. St. Louis of France used often to sign himself as Louis of Poissy, because that was the place where he was baptised, and which was, therefore, dearer to him than any other town in the whole of France.

In the second place, seeing that we have received Baptism, let us exert ourselves to fulfil its obligations. In Baptism we renounced Satan. The "strong man armed," who had our soul in his power, has been cast out and his dominion destroyed. But he will recover himself and come back, and his malicious intent will be doubled if he finds his former abode swept and garnished. We should have nothing in common with him or his works, for we are buried together with Christ in Baptism.² Baptism is for us what the Cross and the grave were for our Lord—a complete death to sin. In Baptism we received a supernatural life with all the gifts and privileges belonging to it. Let us, therefore, live supernaturally, and let all our thoughts, words and actions be supernatural. This is the signification of the salt which we are made to taste at our Baptism, and of the unctions on the organs of hearing and smell. We have received life; let us develop it by the exercise of good works. By Baptism we were made members of the Church. It was the

¹ James i. 18.

² Rom. vi. 4.

kiss wherewith the Church adopted us as her children. Let us then love her as our mother, let us accept her precepts with joy, let her commandments be more precious to us than gold or silver. By Baptism our heavenly Father adopted us as His children, placed us in the kingdom of His Son, and gave us the Holy Ghost in our hearts as the pledge of His love. Let us, therefore, love God as our Father, the Divine Redeemer as our Brother, and the Holy Ghost as the precious life of our soul. We did not know the Holy Spirit, we did not invite Him, yet He came and poured His love into our hearts in overflowing measure while as yet we were babes, took possession of us so that He might protect us, care for us and train us for Himself. He is our first, our best, our truest friend. How could we ever forget His love?

CHAPTER XVII.

THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE.

THE second sacrament instituted for the communication of sanctifying grace is Penance. We will consider: (1) its nature and properties; and (2) the splendour with which the Holy Ghost reveals Himself in it.

1. The Sacrament of Penance is the ordinary means appointed by God for the remission of mortal sins committed after Baptism, and for the restoration of the soul to the state of grace. Baptism blots out all sins—original and actual—of which the recipient had been guilty before grace was given to him; but by Penance those sins are forgiven which have been committed since Baptism, namely, all actual sins, and in the first place personal mortal sins. Mortal sin, committed after Baptism, is an act of our own will and is, consequently, far more culpable and deserving of punishment than original sin. It is, therefore, but just that for its remission God should demand greater personal effort on the part of the sinner, and that forgiveness should be obtained under more severe conditions.

The matter of the Sacrament of Penance is not a material element, but the acts of contrition, confession and satisfaction which must be brought to the sacrament by the penitent. The words of absolution from all the sins which have been repented of and confessed are the form of the sacrament, this being pronounced by the priest as a judicial sentence,

spoken in the place of God. In Baptism, Confirmation and Extreme Unction the only condition required of the recipient is that he place no obstacle in the way. The acts of preparation for those sacraments are only a preparatory condition, and are not essential to the sacrament, for they are not the cause of the effect of grace. In Baptism the remission of sin is effected by an ablution, a cleansing, but in Penance it takes the form and nature of a judgment and sentence, for our Lord said: "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; whose sins you shall retain, they are retained".¹ The priest thus has the power not only to remit sins, but also to retain them whenever the cause submitted to his judgment by the confession of the penitent requires it. As a condition of forgiveness the sinner must repent, must accuse himself, must make satisfaction, for the subject-matter of absolution can be nothing but sin repented of and confessed.

Owing to this voluntary action on the part of the sinner, Penance is neither a mere legal penalty nor an act of mere justice. The infliction of a legal penalty is not regulated by the judgment and will of the guilty person, but by the decree of the judge. On the contrary the sacrament is of the nature of a mutual restoration of friendship, in which the will of the offender and that of Him who is offended meet each other half way, and effect a reconciliation to the satisfaction of both. Contrition contains the will to make satisfaction, while confession and satisfaction imply a submission to the will and decree of God and of His representative. Because Penance is voluntary and proceeds from the heart there is something in it which is honourable and elevating to the penitent, while it gives God an opportunity of showing His infinite mercy.

¹John xx. 23.

Thus does the Sacrament of Penance bear the two-fold character of justice and mercy; and it is with reason that such names as "a laborious baptism" and "the plank of the shipwrecked" have been given to it. If a man has become a castaway from the ship of innocence in which it was intended that he should reach the haven of eternal happiness, God has, of His mercy, left him this one plank of penance. If he desire safety he must cling to it, hold it fast, and submit himself to the disagreeables of the situation as he faces the stormy waves of contrition, confession and satisfaction.

2. But how does the Holy Ghost reveal Himself in this sacrament? We find Him first at its very institution, when our Lord said: "Receive the Holy Ghost: whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven them".¹ By these words Christ gave to His Church the power of forgiving sins in His name. This power is one of the ministeries of the Church, being what is called the power of the keys, which is a part of the priestly-office. Now, every office and every power in the Church comes from the Holy Ghost, and is exercised in His name and by His operation; and this is especially the case in the Sacrament of Penance, because the authority to remit sins is not only an act of divine power, but also an act of divine mercy, which attribute of God stands in special relation to the personality of the Holy Ghost. The Ark and the dove, with an olive branch in its beak, are a beautiful type of the Sacrament of Penance and the action of the Holy Ghost in it.

As we have seen, a number of preparatory acts are required on the part of the penitent: the will to turn to God, faith, holy fear, hope, contrition, charity and a firm purpose of amendment, all of which are salutary acts which cannot be made except under the in-

¹ John xx. 22.

fluence of actual grace. Now, actual grace is an operation of the Holy Ghost, and it is by His influence that it makes its way into our hearts. Here again, therefore, we find the Holy Ghost. He it is who draws men to the Sacrament of Penance. These prevenient graces are, so to speak, the messengers which infinite love and mercy keep sending to the poor wandering sinner to invite him to return to his Father's house. This prevenient action on the part of the Holy Ghost in many cases includes a whole multitude of most marvellous graces. No wonder; for He is the Principle of all good things. This is why, when we prepare for confession, we begin by invoking the Holy Ghost.

Let us now consider the effects of the Sacrament of Penance. The first is the absolution from sin and the blotting out of its guilt. If we look at the manner in which this is effected we shall see what a wonderful work of mercy it is. Sin implies a horrible offence against God, an act of disobedience and a hateful want of gratitude, because it is essentially the transgression of a grave commandment. But by Penance everything is forgiven, however shameful may have been the transgressions. However far the wickedness and weakness of man may extend, so far does the divine mercy reach, and the power and efficacy of the sacramental absolution cover all. But sin is not merely covered by Penance, or, as it were, overlooked by God, for it is actually obliterated and destroyed. Sin is essentially an absence of grace involving guilt, and cannot be removed except by a re-impairing of grace. Therefore, in the Sacrament of Penance, the forgiveness of sin means a true and interior justification, a sanctification, a renovation and a regeneration in the sight of God. The justified sinner becomes quite a new and changed being, interiorly sanctified and in very truth a child of God,

a pure and holy creature. There is no more any trace or even question of his sin; it is forgotten, and everything is restored to him by absolution, namely, his dignity in the Church by the restoration of his lost rights,—as was done formerly by the removal of public penances,—his honour before God and the re-integration of his state of innocence and the supernatural merits which he had gained before he fell last into sin. God rewards the sinner even for his conversion, for he always awakes from sin richer than he was when he fell under its spell.

Such is the overflowing measure of divine mercy! That he may entertain no doubt about what he has gained, the words of absolution are given to him as a visible pledge and assurance. Like Magdalen he hears these consoling words: "Go in peace, thy sins are forgiven thee!" The sinner can point out the very day, the hour, the moment when his sins were forgiven him, for as the pledge of the reality of his sacramental absolution he has the infallible word of God as well as the interior peace and consolation which the Holy Ghost infuses into the heart of the justified sinner. In no sacraments does the Holy Ghost pour out His sweet consolations in such full measure as in this sacrament and in the Holy Eucharist. It is as if He wished to remove the sting from Penance and let the sinner taste sensibly of the sweetness of the kiss of reconciliation. The sacrament is the source of the consolations of the Holy Ghost, and retains the sweetness which marked the circumstances of its institution. On the evening of Easter Day the risen Lord appeared for the first time in the midst of His disciples, and His paschal greeting was the institution of the Sacrament of Penance! He breathed on them the breath of His immortality, and gave to them the Holy Ghost for the remission of sins. This paschal

peace, this paschal joy are still to be found in the Sacrament of Penance; and this peace and joy are no other than the Holy Ghost. How many broken and despairing hearts has He lifted up and comforted in this sacrament? To how many Christian families and communities has He by the same means restored peace? It is a mine of consolation and joy for the whole world. What would the world be without it, and what would become of it without this holy sacrament? It would, indeed, be in a worse plight than was the poor prodigal of the parable with all his folly, ingratitude, debasement and misery; and in such a plight it would remain for ever! In this sacrament the Holy Ghost unceasingly plays the part of the compassionate father of the parable. He goes forth to meet the poor wanderer, he kisses him, he makes good his losses, he clothes him with a new garment and puts new shoes on his feet, and celebrates with the Angels a glorious feast of reconciliation. In a word, the Holy Ghost is eternal love and goodness, which He manifests in this wondrous work of reconciliation of man to God. Well does the Church say of Him at Pentecost: "He Himself is the remission of all sins".¹

Shall we not, therefore, excite our souls to be grateful to the Holy Ghost for this precious gift of His mercy? Still more grateful should we be if He has chosen us to be the dispensers of this gift. Let us rouse ourselves to make frequent use of this sacrament and profit by it with love and confidence, so that we may be partakers in full measure of its glorious fruits. These fruits do not consist only in the remission of grievous sin and in helps of grace against relapse, but also in the gradual restoration of our conscience to a perfect state, in a growing horror of sin, in increasing purity of heart, and in the

¹ Post-Communion for Whit-Tuesday.

detection and uprooting of little sins and faults, and, finally, in a rectitude of conscience which equally avoids laxity and scruples. All this will the Holy Ghost effect in our hearts if we make a frequent and faithful use of the Sacrament of Penance.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE SACRAMENT OF THE HOLY GHOST.

CONFIRMATION is peculiarly the Sacrament of the Holy Ghost, and we must, therefore, make it the subject of a special meditation. We will consider: (1) the signification of Confirmation; (2) its relation to the Holy Ghost, and (3) what practical conclusions can be drawn.

1. Confirmation is to the spiritual life what, in the natural order, we call maturity, full growth or prime of life. This completion and perfection of age occurs when our mental and physical life has reached that stage of development when we need not use our powers for ourselves alone, but can also use them to influence others, and, by doing so, act as members of a larger social body. St. Thomas says that the time when we attain to full age, and are able to perform perfect actions, is an epoch in our lives of special and great importance,¹ but that perfect activity is not attained except by extending it to others. And from this the holy Doctor draws the just conclusion that a special sacrament is needed for this important epoch in the life of man.² Confirmation is this sacrament. It both signifies and effects in us the perfection of the spiritual life, by enabling us, by fulness of grace, to edify others, first, by the example of a virtuous life, and, secondly, by a generous confession of our faith. With Confirmation the state of spiritual childhood

¹ *Summa Theol.*, iii., q. 72, a. 1.

² *Ibid.*, a. 2.

ceases, as the Apostle says: "When I became a man I put away the things of a child".¹

Man receives his spiritual life by Baptism; he is then born again of God, but it is, immediately, for his own sake. He becomes a child of God, an heir of heaven, a member, subject and citizen of the kingdom of Christ. As such it is also necessary that he should be a soldier of Christ, strength for the combat being given him by the grace brought to him in the Holy Eucharist. But he fights more for himself, not being yet called to the public service of arms. This call comes when he is confirmed, and he is then, as it were, enrolled, receives his weapons, and becomes, so to speak, by profession, champion of the faith, not only against the interior enemies of salvation, but also against exterior persecutors of the Church. For this military service he receives an indelible mark on his soul, and thenceforward belongs to the kingdom of Christ, not only as a subject and citizen, but also as a soldier.

All the exterior ceremonies of the Sacrament of Confirmation agree with its interior signification. The chrism with which the forehead of the recipient is signed is composed of olive oil and balsam. In ancient days athletes were anointed with oil in order to make them strong and supple for the fight. The olive is typical of perennial verdure and bloom, and the balsam signifies the strengthening fragrance of a virtuous life. The imposition of hands signifies God's enrolment of the Christian into His military service, as well as the assurance of divine protection and strength from above. The sign of the cross on his forehead—the most prominent spot in his body—is a token that he belongs to Jesus Christ, and that human respect and fear are to find no place in him. By the stroke on the cheek the young Christian

¹ 1 Cor. xiii. 11.

receives what we may call his knighthood, with the external monition that he is to hold himself ready for outrage and persecution. Confirmation being the completion of the Christian life and the solemn enrolment into the service of arms, as well as the introduction to the public life of the Church, it can as a rule be conferred only by a bishop. A bishop alone is in the state of Christian perfection, and is, therefore, empowered to impress its seal. Moreover, no one may raise the standard and enrol warriors except the leader of the army, and this leader is for each respective diocese the bishop. Even the sponsors have a military signification, for a young warrior needs a master and instructor, and the new citizen requires a patron.

2. Such, then, is the signification of Confirmation. What, now, is the relation of the Holy Ghost to it? Even the name often given to it—"the sign of the gift of the Holy Ghost"—reminds us of Him. The matter of the sacrament and its ceremonies remind us still more forcibly of Him. Oil, as we have already seen, is a symbol of the Divine Spirit, and anointing forms a part of all consecrating ceremonies especially ascribed to the Holy Ghost, such as the unction of Baptism, and that of kings and priests. In like manner the imposition of hands signifies an action of the Holy Ghost, as it does at the ordination of priests and the consecration of bishops. The effects of the Sacrament of Confirmation are in quite a special sense operations of the Holy Ghost. Catholic theology shows Him to us as the Principle of development and perfection, and it is these which are especially signified by Confirmation. Furthermore, He is the Spirit of life, zeal, strength and fortitude. He it is who stirs us up and guides us to our end, and who protects us from the snares of the enemy while we are striving to attain to it. He it is who encourages martyrs

and confessors, and makes them strong and invincible. This is most graphically illustrated in the story of the martyrdom of St. Lucy. That holy virgin answered the governor that she did not fear his threats, because the Holy Ghost was in her. It was impossible to remove her, and the executioners were compelled to behead her on the spot where sentence had been passed on her. The action of the Holy Ghost, both in fruitfulness in good works and in courage and fortitude in the confession of faith, is signified by the bishop's imposition of hands. Finally, Confirmation impresses on the soul the indelible character of the Christian soldier. The character of Baptism gives us the power to confess the faith by receiving the sacraments of the Church; but the character of Confirmation enables us to confess it in the face of all enemies and persecutors, officially and by virtue of our state as soldiers of Christ. All power and all spiritual capacity in the Church come from the Holy Ghost, the Author and Principle of the various offices in the ecclesiastical hierarchy.

Thus everything about Confirmation brings us back to the Holy Ghost, and the Council of Florence was right in saying:¹ What the visible descent of the Holy Ghost effected in the Apostles in an extraordinary way, that the holy Sacrament of Confirmation should effect in Christians in an ordinary way, in a measure corresponding to their place and circumstances. The Holy Ghost descended on the Apostles under the form of tongues of fire, because He came to confirm them in their mission, which was not only to confess and defend the faith, but also to preach and spread it. In Confirmation the oil and balsam take the place of the fiery tongues. Oil is the food and nourishment of flame, and the olive and balsam signify constant fruitfulness in good works. Thus

¹ *Decr. pro Armenis.*

both in principle and signification Confirmation retains the outward signs of the mystery of Pentecost. When, therefore, the Christian receives Confirmation he celebrates his Pentecost, and, according to the promise given to all by St. Peter, receives the gift of the Holy Ghost,¹ and is filled with Him.² Whenever Confirmation is alluded to in Holy Scripture it is mentioned either as the receiving,³ or as the descent of the Holy Ghost.⁴ What our Lord promised the Apostles in regard to the Holy Ghost was that they should be "endued with power from on high" and should "receive the power of the Holy Ghost";⁵ and this is precisely the effect of Confirmation. Therefore, Confirmation is, in the exact sense of the word, the Sacrament of the Holy Ghost.

3. There are three conclusions to be drawn from what has been said. We must in the first place thank the Holy Ghost from our hearts and rejoice that He has deigned to communicate Himself to us through the Sacrament of Confirmation. This sacrament is our coming of age in the spiritual life and the proclamation of our majority. Our education is completed, and now has begun our life of Christian action and warfare in the highest and noblest sense of the word. We can see the infinite goodness and wisdom of the Holy Ghost in providing us at this important crisis of our lives with special graces which not only signify but effect the perfection of our spiritual growth.

Secondly, if we have to prepare either ourselves or others for this important sacrament, we must do it with the greatest care, for very much depends upon the fulness of its effects. Confirmation is the true Pentecost of individuals, and comes to us but once. The Apostles give us a beautiful example how we

¹ Acts ii. 38.

² Acts ii. 4.

³ Acts viii. 17.

⁴ Acts xix. 6.

⁵ Luke xxiv. 49; Acts i. 8.

ought to prepare ourselves for it by prayer and by a lively desire for the graces of this holy sacrament. Let us, therefore, have an exalted idea of Confirmation, let us see that we are sufficiently instructed, and let us receive it with hearts pure and well prepared.

Thirdly, should we have already received Confirmation we must be careful to let its graces influence our lives. The reception of the sacrament is over, but its character and obligations remain. Confirmation, as we have seen, makes us soldiers of Christ, and enables us to live and work not only for ourselves, but also for the common welfare, and, above all, to be zealous for the interests of the Church. St. John says of the words of our Lord: "He that believeth in Me, as the Scripture saith, from him shall flow rivers of living water," that He said this of the Spirit which they should receive.¹ Should we not be ungrateful citizens if we refused to give our assistance to our country and help her with our strength and talents, and used them solely for ourselves? But we owe even more to the Church, which we may rightly call the country of our souls. Through her we received the Holy Ghost, and reached our full age in the spiritual life; so let us now act as men and soldiers of the kingdom of Christ, and be indefatigable in our efforts to further the interests of the Church and of the whole of Christendom. We should desire only one thing, namely, the welfare of the Church, grieve only when she suffers loss, strive only to be of use to her. We should go through life with one fixed idea, how to do something for the benefit of the Church, with only one subject of remorse, our neglect in the salvation of souls, and only one anxiety, lest we should leave this life without doing anything, worthy of the name, for the welfare of our Lord's kingdom upon earth. Oh, how

¹ John vii. 38, 39.

good would it be for the interests of the Church if we all acted in this spirit! But, alas, there are not many who do; although Confirmation should effect this in all of us. Let us waken up within us the spirit of this grace; for it has been already given to us and is in us by virtue of our Confirmation. If only the will were there, we could each one of us do much more for the general welfare of our Holy Church. We could all pray, we could all work and all suffer. If we offered all our prayers, labours and sufferings for the interests of Christianity it would suffice.

But we are not only citizens of the kingdom of Christ, we are also its soldiers. In the kingdoms of this earth there is always a standing army, whose calling it is to fight for its country. In the Church those who have been confirmed belong in an especial way to her standing army; for, as we have seen, the meaning and peculiar effect of this sacrament with its grace and indelible mark is to fit men to fulfil this duty. We are soldiers of Christ, even to the very inmost of our souls, we are signed with the sign of our Captain, Jesus Christ, we are specially called and specially armed to fight for the cause of God and the Church against all enemies and persecutors. Even as the warrior carries on his helmet the arms of his leader, so does the bishop trace the sign of the cross with chrism on the foreheads of those whom he confirms, in order that all the world may see that they have henceforth to do with soldiers of Christ who are not ashamed of their faith, who will boldly confess it and are willing to lay down their lives rather than betray it. According to St. Paul the spiritual armour of the perfect Christian is precisely like that of a warrior. He is girt about with truth, he has on the breast-plate of justice, he is protected by the shield of faith, he has on the helmet of salvation, and carries

the sword of the Spirit.¹ Such are the weapons with which Confirmation equips us for the spiritual fight. It arms us with the gifts and virtues of patience, perseverance, intrepidity, magnanimity, fortitude, and, lastly, with the martyr spirit which has turned millions of frail men and women into glorious witnesses of the faith, who have crowned the Church with immortal fame. Confirmation has enrolled and equipped the holy army of martyrs and confessors.

If it ever falls to us to make a bold confession of the Catholic faith, let us remember that we have been confirmed. Most certainly the indelible character of a soldier of Christ lays on us the obligation of defending and confessing the holy faith, and, moreover, gives us the necessary strength, for by it we received a title to the actual graces which will enable us to fulfil this duty. If we ask the Holy Ghost for these graces we shall receive them. With all these advantages what excuse could we have for faint-heartedness? None! Remember that nothing is more shameful in a soldier than timidity and fear. A coward is unworthy of his colours. By cowardice our character as the soldiers of Christ would become our shame and condemnation, whereas it will bring immortal glory to the brave and strong, who will be acknowledged by our Lord Himself before His Father and before the holy Angels. "Every one, therefore, that shall confess Me before men, I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven."² This confession of us before God will be more glorious for us and will avail us more than any distinction which could be conferred on a soldier in this world, for the renown with which it invests us is eternal.

Fortitude and loyalty in the confession of our faith are all the more important in the present day when

¹Eph. vi. 14 *sqq.*

²Matt. x. 32.

strength and courage about the interests of God are so rare, and are to be chiefly met with where, alas, they have but little right to exist; for there is no sect so ridiculous and disgraceful but it has its followers. Why should we be ashamed of the standard of Jesus Christ? Is not His cause the holiest, the mightiest and the most honourable which we can conceive? Only one thing can bring dishonour on it, and that is its betrayal by its own soldiers. Let us never act such a part towards it. It is the standard of our Lord and of His Holy Church which is held up. Take courage! The Holy Ghost is in our hearts, and it is in His power that the Church has fought until now, and has brought to nought the attacks of her enemies. A generous confession of faith is a victory which gives courage through all the ranks of the Christian army, and is the best thanksgiving which we can offer for the grace of Confirmation.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE MOST HOLY SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR.

THE Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar excels by its sublime dignity all the other sacraments, both on account of its nature—for it is no other than Jesus Christ Himself—and of its wonderful effects. Clearly, it is the end and crown of all the sacraments. It will be, therefore, necessary that we should consider the relation of the Holy Ghost to it. This relation is twofold: (1) as it regards the origin and the general character of the sacrament; and (2) as it regards its effects.

1. The Holy Eucharist is in its essence the true Body and Blood of our Lord, or, in other words, it is Jesus Christ Himself, really and substantially present under the appearances of bread and wine, in order that He may be our food and be offered in sacrifice for us. The Holy Eucharist is at once a sacrifice and a sacrament. The sacrament is effected and Jesus Christ made present in it by the act of sacrifice, and is dispensed and received by us in Holy Communion. We have already considered the Holy Eucharist as a sacrifice, when treating of the priestly-office of the Church; and it now remains for us to consider it as a sacrament.

The origin and character of the Holy Eucharist lead us at once to the Holy Ghost. It was instituted by Jesus Christ, God made Man. His Sacred Humanity is the principal instrument of the production of the sacrament, but it is His Divinity which gives it to

us. Only divine power can work the miracles which belong to the production of this sacrament. God effects the Holy Eucharist, as He alone devised it.

The Holy Eucharist is above all the sacrament of love—eternal and infinite love, the manifestations of which in this sacrament are concentrated and gathered together, so much so that in it we have, so to speak, a focus of all the rays of the sun of divine love, an epitome of all the inventions and works of the God of love.

The Holy Eucharist is the greatest act of God's love of Himself, for in it He glorifies Himself by the revelation of His wisdom and power, and by the adoration and worship which it brings Him from men. The Holy Eucharist is in truth a great and sufficient sacrifice, by which God receives adequate worship. It is the compendium, the complement, the completion of the adoration offered to Him in heaven and earth. It is a sacrifice, being ceaselessly offered, which converts the whole world into a living temple on the thousands of altars on which the Son—equal to the Father—is offered to Him in worship. This sacrifice is so full of the glory of God that He Himself expresses His delight in seeing it offered, and is, as it were, glorying in it.¹ In the Holy Eucharist, as nowhere else, God finds His end in creation.

The Holy Eucharist is also love for the Church. What an honour and joy for her is this abiding presence in her of God made Man, and the power which she exercises over the real Body of her Lord, whom she offers, shelters and dispenses! What a source of life, what a guarantee of unity does she not possess in this sacrament! Does it not prove that hers is the religion of Jesus Christ, who is thus present in her? Does it not show her to be the true Spouse of Christ, the great priestess of the

¹ Mal. i. 11.

world? With the Blessed Sacrament in her possession she envies neither the Old Covenant nor the blessed citizens of heaven.

The Holy Eucharist is, moreover, the love of God for individual men. This sacrament is His most precious method of giving Himself substantially to us, of making of Himself an instrument of grace, and of blessing us in Person. What a love is that which constrains Him to be the food of the divine life which was given to us in Baptism; which makes Him, as it were, throw Himself into the stream of that life by which our physical existence is maintained, in order thus to be nearer to us, to penetrate into our very hearts, and unite Himself to us in the closest manner, to thus honour us, console us and enrich us with the treasures of His love, and give Himself to us as the pledge of eternal life. He has done all this without any attractions on our side, without any reference to our worthiness or preparation, and even in spite of our coldness and of our abuse of His love and confidence.

His love extends itself even to the material creation, which He draws unto Himself and makes a condition of His sacramental life, and which in His Body He raises to its highest perfection, even to a share in the privileges of the spiritual nature. The Holy Eucharist is, therefore, a new link between God and the material creation.

Finally, how could God made Man, when thus shedding the rays of His love, have not reflected them upon Himself? Indeed His Body lives here a most marvellous existence, more marvellous in many respects than that which it lives in heaven. In the Blessed Sacrament it is the glorious instrument of grace and holiness to the whole world. In it He receives the honour, love and worship which He merited by His bitter Passion and shameful Death.

The worship of the Christian altar compensates to Him for the Passion and the Cross.

Thus the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar is the crown and perfection of the designs of God's love, the confirmation and compendium and also the extension of all the institutions of the divine mercy. It is, if such a comparison may be made, like a sun-dial on which Divine Love marks all the degrees of His action. Its golden point reaches to all the ends of creation, and covers all creatures with the rays of its light.

The Holy Eucharist is, therefore, the great work of the love of God. The Holy Ghost is God, and as such, He, with the two other Persons of the Godhead, devised and decreed it; but more than this—it can, as a work of love, be especially ascribed to Him. It is necessary only to consider the names borne by the Holy Ghost to see His relation to the Blessed Sacrament. His Divine Personality is expressed by the terms, “Holy Spirit, Love, Gift”; and here, in the Holy Eucharist, everything is spirit and life,¹ so that even matter is clothed with spiritual properties. Here dwells the Holy One Himself, the Source of all holiness of the Church, here is the Gift of all gifts, and here is love in overflowing measure. But we can further consider the Holy Ghost's share in the institution of the Blessed Sacrament. We have seen how the Divine Redeemer, in all that He did as Man, allowed Himself to be guided by the Holy Ghost, and His soul to be influenced by Him. Not only did He work His miracles through Him, but even all the movements of His mind, whether in their strength or tenderness, whether in their love, compassion or holy enthusiasm, were under the influence of the Holy Ghost.² This was, undoubtedly, the case with the institution and first celebration of the Most Holy

¹ John vi. 64.

² Luke x. 21.

Sacrament of the Altar. We can imagine our Blessed Lord when He instituted the Holy Eucharist at the Last Supper, kindled with holy fervour, filled with an indescribable love for God and man, and illuminated with heavenly joy. He was standing on the threshold of a new, wonderful existence, never to cease in this world, and the end and intention of God in the institution of this sacrament were presented before His spirit in all their clearness, beauty and immeasurable effects. The wondrous world of grace, holiness, consolation, honour and glory for God and man, which were to result from it to the end of time, were displayed before His mind. Who would not have rejoiced at the new and glorious creation which then began? The beautiful words of our Lord recorded in Scripture: "With desire I have desired to eat this Pasch with you before I suffer," were a fervent aspiration of love and emotion which the Holy Spirit stirred up in that divine and human Heart. This part in the institution of the Holy Eucharist belongs incontestably to the Divine Spirit. Well does the Church exclaim in the office of the Most Holy Sacrament: "Oh, how sweet, Lord, is Thy spirit, who that Thou mightest show Thy goodness to Thy children feedest them with the sweetest bread from heaven!"

The Holy Ghost still continues His action in the Blessed Sacrament. Even as He inclined the Heart of God Incarnate to institute it, and to co-operate in its production, so does He ever incline the hearts of the faithful towards it. He prepares our hearts for Holy Communion, especially by the other sacraments. These are the steps up which we ascend to the Blessed Sacrament, and which lead up to the same, either by making us capable and worthy to receive it, or else by communicating the power by which it is effected for us. Furthermore, if faith in this Holy Sacrament be kindled within us, if God's end and intention in

giving it are revealed to us, if its riches and glory are manifested to us, if our hearts burn with a holy desire to receive our Lord, if we present ourselves before our Divine Guest with humility and childlike love and joyful confidence, it is solely the effect of the grace of the Holy Ghost, who is inviting us home to the Spouse of our souls. "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come, Lord Jesus."¹ The Holy Ghost who dwells within us longs to return to the Source whence He proceeds. It is, moreover, the Holy Ghost who, by the living institutions of the Church, keeps alive and kindles adoration of the Blessed Sacrament: (by the beautiful Benediction services, the Forty Hours' Prayer, the carrying of the Sacred Host in solemn procession, perpetual adoration and, especially, by the glorious Feast of Corpus Christi and its octave.) The Holy Spirit preserves a continual bond between us and the Tabernacle, even as under the Old Covenant He foreshadowed the eucharistic mystery by types and prophecies. The priesthood of Aaron, with its Temple, feasts, sacrifices, manna, paschal lamb and Ark of the Covenant, the tree of life, the sacrifice of Melchisedech—all these were means employed by the Holy Ghost to prepare the way for the divine mysteries.

2. The effects of the Blessed Sacrament have a still closer relation to the Holy Ghost. Even if there be no personal mission of the Holy Spirit in the production of the Eucharist, there certainly is in the effects of Holy Communion. The preservation and increase of sanctifying grace and of the whole life of grace, which are the general effects of Holy Communion, have a special relation to the Holy Ghost; and at the same time He produces them by no other sacrament in such a sublime degree as by Holy Communion. Our Lord Himself pointed to it as a sacrament of life. "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood

¹ Apoc. xxii. 20.

abideth in Me . . . and shall live for ever.”¹ Even as sanctifying grace contains all other supernatural graces in embryo, so does the Blessed Sacrament produce the effects of all the others, because it is their end and crown. This fulness of effect is signified by the outward sign of the sacrament, namely, bread and wine, which are the symbols of life and strength. Even as material food preserves and develops physical life, so does the Blessed Sacrament restore, develop, fructify and seal the supernatural life of the soul. Communion is the very closest union with Jesus Christ, a union not only moral, but physical and, in a sense, tangible, which can never be surpassed except by the beatitude of heaven. The effect produced by such a union must be both peculiar and extraordinary. Just think what marvels resulted—in the cases of Thomas, Peter, Magdalen and many sick, dead and sinners—from the mere presence of our Lord and from the touch of His Sacred Humanity! Thus we may be sure that virtue exists in the Blessed Sacrament sufficient to restore, strengthen and raise the spiritual life to an unheard-of height. All the other sacraments are streams of grace; here we have the source itself! We know that wherever the life of grace is produced or increased there is the mission of the Holy Ghost.

These are the general effects of Holy Communion; there are others which belong particularly to it. The first of these effects is an increase of love of our Lord, precisely because Communion unites us so intimately to Him, and because intimacy and union always produce love. Moreover, everything in the Holy Eucharist reveals such surpassing love of God for men that he must be blind and callous indeed in whom it does not call forth a responsive love. The second effect is joy. Joy, satisfaction and delight are always the effect of love; and these are signified by the act of

¹ John vi. 57 sq.

Communion and by the feast which our Lord holds with us, thereby to prove His love and unite Himself more closely to us. This joy is sometimes a sweet peace hidden in the depths of our souls, which can be disturbed by nothing temporal; sometimes it is a feeling of satisfaction, a sense of our dignity, in face of which all the allurements of the world are as nothing, for we are conscious of the glorious tokens of divine love which have been given us, and we know that we possess something better than what the world could give us. Sometimes this joy takes the form of equanimity in danger and sacrifice; sometimes it shows itself as an unquenchable desire to do what will please our Lord; and sometimes it expresses itself in an invincible fortitude and even in a love of suffering, such as was shown by many martyrs. Before these champions of the faith were called before their judges they fortified themselves at the sacred banquet, and then, to use a phrase of St. Chrysostom, they came down into the arena like fiery lions, terrible to the evil enemy and to the world. This was but reasonable, for they carried in their hearts that which is the strength of the whole Church Militant.

The Blessed Sacrament gives a peculiar stamp, not only to individuals, but also to the whole Church; it gives it, what we may call, a eucharistic colour. A beauty is to be found in the Catholic Church which can be found nowhere else. We find in her a generosity, we might almost say, a transport of love, and an unbounded desire for sacrifice, which is revealed in full perfection in her works of Christian charity, her consecrated virgins, her observance of the evangelical counsels, and in her martyrs.¹ This peculiar and inimitable beauty of the Catholic Church is at once the bloom and the fruit of the Holy Eucharist, the mystery of love. One communion compensates

¹ Oswald, *Die heiligen Sakramente*, vol. i., part 4, § 2.

for all disappointment and makes every sacrifice easy. Thus, little by little, Holy Communion effects in us an interior union with and likeness to Christ, and we are made capable of a life in Him and with Him. Our Divine Lord Himself says: "As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me the same also shall live by Me".¹ Even as I possess divine life in the Father, and have communicated this life to My Sacred Humanity, in like manner will I give a participation of My divine life to those who receive My Sacred Humanity in this sacrament. As I think, will and feel, so will they; and My thoughts, My views, My actions, My intentions will become theirs. This is the life of which St. Paul spoke when he wrote: "I live now not I; but Christ liveth in me".² Verily, nothing in all Christendom can be more sublime than this!

Love, joy, peace, courage: such are the peculiar effects of Holy Communion. By receiving it the glorious mission of the Holy Ghost is fulfilled in the heart of the Christian. All these effects are fruits of the Holy Ghost.

A desire to receive our Lord in Holy Communion often and eagerly, and with the intention of participating in the operations of the Holy Ghost, will be a fitting conclusion to draw from this meditation. Holy Communion is the most efficient and the most marvellous instrument by which the Holy Spirit communicates His graces to us. As once our Lord sent the Holy Ghost from His Heart to the Church at Pentecost, so does He give Him to every one now in Holy Communion. Communion is to us a kind of Pentecost when He baptises us with the Holy Ghost and with the fire of His love. Certainly there is no better way to strengthen and establish firmly the grace

¹ John vi. 58.

² Gal. ii. 20.

of the Holy Ghost in our hearts than to receive Holy Communion frequently and worthily.

Let us thank the Holy Ghost for His share in effecting this Most Holy Sacrament, and for the incalculable benefits He has thereby showered on us. If we feel drawn to a more frequent reception of the Blessed Sacrament, let us not forget that the attraction comes from the Holy Ghost. He now prepares souls to receive our Lord in Holy Communion even as He formerly prepared them for His Advent. Let us ask Him to undertake our preparation, and infuse into our hearts a ray of His grace, light, warmth and love, so that in our souls our Lord may find a reflection of the sweetness and delights of His dwelling-place in the bosom of the Godhead. Above all, let us beg the Holy Ghost to grant us the grace of receiving Holy Viaticum at the hour of our death.¹

¹ We will not make a further study of the remaining sacraments. We have already spoken of Holy Order in chapters xii. and xv.; and Matrimony is considered in chapters ix. and xxxvii. So far as Extreme Unction effects the forgiveness of sin it is only an extension and complement of the Sacrament of Penance; so far as it gives physical health it is treated of in chapter ix.; and so far as it is a remedy for the spiritual weakness of the soul it will be considered together with Fortitude in chapter xxx.

CHAPTER XX.

GRACES GRATUITOUSLY GIVEN.

BEFORE concluding our meditations on the relation of the Holy Ghost to the Church something must be said about the so-called gratuitous graces. These graces are the complement of the official endowment of the Church, given with a view to her end, namely, the salvation of the world. Let us, therefore, consider: (1) what these graces are; (2) what is their number; (3) what is their relation to the Holy Ghost.

1. What is to be understood by the gratuitous graces? They are supernatural gifts and activities given to certain members of the Church for the spiritual needs of others, and not for the sanctification of their own souls. They are, above all, real graces and supernatural gifts, for they can be neither acquired nor merited by natural means, because their end is a supernatural action proceeding from the pure favour and condescension of God. So far, they are indistinguishable from sanctifying grace and the gifts which accompany it; but the difference lies in their immediate object. Gratuitous graces have not for their object and end the sanctification and perfection of those who hold them, nor are these made more holy or pleasing to God by possessing them, but their object is the benefit of others and of the whole Church. St. Paul thus describes their end: "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man unto profit".¹ "He that prophesieth speaketh to men unto

¹ 1 Cor. xii. 7.

edification and exhortation and comfort.”¹ And in another passage the Apostle pronounces these gifts to be excellent in that measure in which they are thus useful.²

Another difference is that just and sinners can equally receive and exercise these gratuitous gifts. This is not the case with sanctifying grace and the virtues, which constitute the essential sanctity and spiritual excellence of him who possesses them. It follows that sanctifying grace is a possession of a higher order, because it unites us immediately to God by charity, whereas the gratuitous gifts do so only indirectly, by preparing the way for union with Him by grace. Having concluded his explanation of these gifts, St. Paul says: “But be zealous for the better gifts. I show you a yet more excellent way;”³ and having said this he proceeds with his grand eulogy of the theological virtues, and especially of charity. When the disciples returned from their first apostolic journey and vaunted themselves of their supernatural powers over nature, our Lord told them that real happiness did not consist in these gifts, but in the possession of eternal salvation and all that conduces to it with certainty.⁴

More than once Scripture places before us instances when sinners have been for a time endowed with supernatural gifts. Such was the case with Caiphas,⁵ Balaam,⁶ Pharaoh,⁷ Nabuchodonozor and Baltassar.⁸ Our Lord Himself said: “Many shall say to Me in that day: Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name, and cast out devils in Thy name, and done many miracles in Thy name? and then will I profess to them I never knew you.”⁹ Another difference between sanctifying grace and the gratuitous gifts is

¹ 1 Cor. xiv. 3.² 1 Cor. xiv.³ 1 Cor. xii. 31.⁴ Luke x. 20.⁵ John xi. 51.⁶ Num. xxii. sq.⁷ Gen xli. 1.⁸ Dan. ii. 28; iv. 2 sq.; v. 5.⁹ Matt. vii. 22.

that in the former there is a natural connection between it and its accompanying gifts which we do not find in the latter. No doubt they all have one common end, namely, the welfare of others and of the Church; but there is such a variety in their nature that they do not depend upon each other, so that one may possess one gift without possessing the others.

2. This much can be said about the gratuitous graces in general; it now remains to consider their number. In the wider sense of the word the sacerdotal character might be counted among them, for—unlike the characters of Baptism and Confirmation—it is given not for the personal benefit of him who receives it, but for the ministration of an ecclesiastical office. Again, the power of the keys might be included among them, because it also is conferred for the benefit of others and of the whole Church. At present, however, we are considering the gratuitous graces in their narrower sense, as they are spoken of in Scripture, and as the acts, not of an ordinary, but of an extraordinary, ministry. Even in the Old Testament we find some of them mentioned, but it is to St. Paul that we owe a more detailed enumeration. He puts them at eight, or, perhaps, nine: prophecy, the discerning of spirits, the gift of working miracles, the gift of tongues, the words of wisdom and understanding, the gift of interpretation, the gift of psalmody, the gift of the faith impetratory of miracles, help of the brethren and (ecclesiastical) government.¹ Our Lord promised these graces in general when He said: "He that believeth in Me the works that I do he also shall do, and greater than these shall he do".² In detail, He gave the Apostles the power to heal the sick, raise the dead and drive out devils, and added the promise that these gifts should remain in the Church.³

¹ I Cor. xii. 7-11, 28; xiv. 22, 26; *cf.* Rom. xii. 6-8.

² John xiv. 12.

³ Matt. x. 8.

“And these signs shall follow them that believe,” said He: “In My name . . . they shall speak with new tongues, they shall take up serpents, and if they shall drink any deadly poison it shall not hurt them”.¹ The end of these graces is—as has been already said—the benefit of our neighbour and of the Church. Their various objects can be divided as follows: The words of wisdom and understanding, the gift of faith impetratory of miracles, the gift of healing, the gifts of working miracles, of prophecy, of discernment, of spirits, of psalmody,² the gift of tongues and the gift of interpretation are bestowed for the assistance of the interior life. The word of wisdom and the word of understanding enlighten the intelligence of the preachers of faith, while the gifts of working miracles, healing and of the faith impetratory of miracles confirm their words. The gifts of prophecy, discernment of spirits and psalmody fortify the will of the believer, while the gift of tongues and the interpretation of speech are for the benefit of the unbeliever. The gift of ministry to the brethren,³ and that of government relate to the exterior life of the Church and the faithful.⁴ Something must now be said about each of these gifts in particular.

According to St. Paul prophecy consists in a permanent and supernatural gift of imparting good Christian teaching and exhortation. There is, moreover, to be understood by the word a certain supernatural knowledge and prediction of future things which could not be known except by a divine communication.⁵ The discernment of spirits, of which St. Paul speaks, seems to have, first, a connection with prophecy,⁶ and,

¹ Mark xvi. 17; Luke ix. 1; xi. 19.

² 1 Cor. xiv. 26.

³ Rom. xii. 7, 8; 1 Cor. xiii. 3.

⁴ 1 Cor. xiv. 3, 22, 24, 25; Acts xi. 27 *sqq.*; xxi. 4 *sqq.*, 8 *sqq.*

⁵ 1 Cor. xiv. 29; 1 Thess. v. 21.

⁶ 1 Cor. xiv. 37.

further, with the divine origin of the doctrine taught.¹ Very likely it was always united to prophecy.²

The gifts of the faith impetratory of miracles, of healing the sick and of working miracles belong to the same category.³ The faith impetratory of miracles is probably best explained by saying that it is the special confidence and assurance necessary for the working of a miracle.⁴ The gifts of healing and miracles are identical as far as the healing is supernatural and miraculous; but there is this difference between them—that healing is a miracle worked only on the body of man, and that miracle has a more extended sphere. To this gift belongs also the power over evil spirits and that of raising the dead. These gifts enhance, as no others can, the authority of him who possesses them, and inspire faith and confidence in his words, for they give evidence that God has endued him, as it were, with His own omnipotence, and is revealing Himself in him. To some, as to the Apostles, this gift has been bestowed, apparently, in no passing way, but permanently, so that its holders have been able to exercise it at all times whenever inspired to do so by the Holy Ghost. The words of our Lord, quoted above,⁵ point to this inference; and it appears to have been also the case with Moses when he led the people of Israel out of Egypt.⁶ The possession of this gift is most important, nay, almost indispensable, to the first heralds of faith, as also in the case of extraordinary vocations. But as soon as the faith has been firmly planted in souls it is no longer so necessary.

The gift of tongues consisted in this, that—to the

¹ 1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25.

² F. R. Cornely, S. J., *Cursus Script. sacr., Com. in 1 Ep. S. Pauli ad Cor.*, p. 363 sq., 410 sq.

³ 1 Cor. xii. 9.

⁴ Matt. xvii. 20; Luke xvii. 5.

⁵ Matt. x. 8; Luke ix. 1; x. 19; Acts iii. 6.

⁶ Exod. iv. 2.

amazement of the unbelievers—the faithful prayed and praised God in a totally unknown tongue, so that even those who prayed in it did not know what they were saying, unless they also possessed the gift of interpretation.¹

The word of wisdom and the word of understanding comprise the gift of teaching the mysteries of faith with clearness, solidity and power. They consist in a certain divine assistance in preaching the faith by which the preacher is enabled to address himself to the practical intelligence of his hearers. This is effected by the word of understanding, when the ordinary lessons of faith are brought home with power and efficacy to each one, and by the word of wisdom,² when the deeper mysteries of faith are expounded in a manner conformable to their sublimity.³

According to St. Paul, the gift of interpretation consists in the supernatural power of explaining what was manifested by the gift of tongues.⁴ Lastly, by helping the brethren St. Paul most probably meant care for the poor, and by the gift of government skill in the administration of the temporal affairs of the Church.

3. Now, who is the Author of these gratuitous graces? The Holy Ghost. It is to Him that they are to be especially attributed. In previous meditations we have seen that Scripture ascribes prophecy and miracles to Him; and in the Acts we find the exercise of the individual gifts likewise attributed to Him. In reference to the miracles of Pentecost it is stated that the disciples were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with divers tongues according as the Holy Ghost gave them to speak.⁵ It is, however,

¹ I Cor. xiv. 1-25.

² Heb. vi. 1 *sq.*

³ I Cor. ii. 6 *sq.*; Heb. v. 11 *sq.* See below chapters xxvi. and xxviii., on the Gifts of Understanding and Wisdom.

⁴ I Cor. xiv. 5, 13, 28.

⁵ Acts ii. 4; x. 45; xi. 28; xix. 6.

chiefly to St. Paul, in his first epistle to the Corinthians, that we owe a detailed account of the nature, origin and purpose of the gratuitous graces. It seems as if he could not refrain from repeating over and over again that it is from the Holy Ghost that they come, whether they are looked at generally or in detail. "Now there are diversities of grace," he says, "but the same Spirit." And again: "All these things one and the same Spirit worketh, dividing to every one according as He will".¹ "By the Spirit he (who has the gift of tongues) speaketh mysteries."² It is on account of their origin in the Holy Spirit that they are called spiritual gifts and graces. He it is who is the Principle of all graces and exterior tokens of God's love, and especially of those which are, at least partially, so evidently supernatural and so purely miraculous that, even as compared with sanctifying grace, they are distinguished by the royal profusion of the benefits they confer, and are thus essential proofs and privileges of Christ the High-Priest. They accompany Holy Orders like a rich dowry which contributes most effectually to the fruitful exercise of the Church's teaching and priestly-office, and to promote the common welfare; for the effects of these gifts dispose the hearts of the hearers to a willing acceptance of the faith, both by revealing to them the higher powers which abide in its preachers, and by the benefits which men receive from them. These gifts are, therefore, very active and valuable powers in the Church, and it is not possible but that they should be under the immediate direction and guidance of the Holy Ghost who is the Lord and, so to speak, the Soul of the Church.

What great things have been effected by these gifts for the welfare and extension of the Church! We can see this by the effect produced by them on Simon

¹ I Cor. xii. 4, 11.

² I Cor. xiv. 2.

Magus, on the Gentiles and the Jews. With what astonishment were they seized at the sight of these miracles! ¹ The rapid spread of the Church in the earlier ages was mainly due to the exercise of these gifts. They are an unmistakable token of her living union with the Holy Ghost, and are a sufficient proof of her truth and divinity. No other Church can boast of them. They vanish from a Christian body the moment it separates itself from the true Church. But in her they are never inactive. Some gifts are being constantly applied and exercised, such as the power of driving out devils, healing of the sick, the gift of prophecy and the words of wisdom and understanding. Others, such as the gift of miracles, flash forth from time to time from the heart of the Church in which God dwells, to attest that she is the same Church as she was in the days of the Apostles. The difference between the Church of to-day and the Church of former ages, as far as the gratuitous graces are concerned, is only that in former ages these gifts were bestowed with more profusion and on a far greater number of persons. There are excellent reasons for the difference. In the first ages it was necessary for the Church, as it were, to force an entrance, because the kingdom of Satan held sway over nearly the whole world. Now, on the contrary, the Church is spread all over the earth. Looked at from a natural point of view, the Apostles sent out by the Holy Ghost were weak, poor and ignorant, and, therefore, there was every reason why God should arm them with supernatural and miraculous gifts. In the beginning of the Church there existed no fixed organisation for the spread of the faith or for deeper religious teaching, but now much is effected by ecclesiastical learning, by theological schools and by applying the lessons of past experience. Much that

¹ Acts ii. 7; viii. 19; xiv. 10.

was formerly done by the gratuitous graces has now become a part of the ordinary and unostentatious life of the Church. In the apostolic ages the fire of the Holy Ghost shone visibly throughout the various degrees of the Mystical Body, because it was necessary that the Church should attract attention until such a time when she should be able to draw to herself the notice of the world by her increase, growth and solidity. The time came when, without losing any of her miraculous gifts, the Church was able to bring forth other proofs of her divine origin in the wonderful propagation and preservation of her faith.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE CHRISTIAN—SANCTIFYING GRACE.

THE Church is the Holy Ghost's great kingdom on earth. We have hitherto considered only her principal members which constitute her hierarchy, but now we must go farther and consider the subjects and citizens of the kingdom. The wonderful vital powers which the Holy Ghost deposited in the Church must be active and productive; Jesus Christ, the invisible Head of the Church, must have brethren to be partakers of His excellence. Who, then, is the citizen, the child of the Church? In a word, the Christian. He also is a creation of the Holy Ghost. To convince ourselves of this we will consider: (1) what a Christian is; (2) to whom he owes all that he is; and (3) what conclusions there are to be drawn.

1. What, then, is a Christian? A supernatural state and condition are essential to his being. A Christian, in the fullest sense of the word, is a supernatural being, and he is, therefore, something more than, something different from, what he appears to be; and is possessed of more than what he has, or could have, by virtue of his natural condition, even under the most favourable circumstances, and however great and sublime he might be by nature. His physical and mental qualities and characteristics make him only a man; what makes him a Christian is essentially supernatural. But what is the supernatural? In the strict and proper sense of the word it means that which is above created nature, which is not essential

to it, and which could not proceed from it—something, therefore, which is absolutely beyond its power, aspirations or necessities. This applies first of all to the Beatific Vision, and to everything which could make man capable of aspiring to it as his end. This end is so infinitely above every created nature that we cannot have even an idea of it. Scripture says: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man what things God hath prepared for them that love Him".¹ Who could conceive what God's life is in itself? Who could imagine that He wills to communicate this life to us, and load us with the treasures of His own nature? Now, there must be the means to attain to this end, and prepare for it; and the means must be supernatural. Hence, to attain to our supernatural end we must, even here below, possess a supernatural existence, a supernatural life and supernatural power. A Christian is, therefore, a being raised to a supernatural condition for a supernatural end, and endowed with supernatural aptitudes and powers. He is a being raised to quite a new mode of life, analogous, indeed, to the natural life, but differing essentially from it. This likeness and this difference consist in this, that our nature keeps its faculties, qualities and organisation, but receives new powers and new qualities which make it capable of a divine life. In our soul spirituality is, so to speak, the substance and foundation of all other qualities; and from it proceed the understanding and the will, from which two principal powers of the soul proceed a whole number of intellectual and moral habits which lend their assistance to the understanding and will. Such is the natural condition of our soul, to which its supernatural condition entirely corresponds. On the spiritual substance of the soul there is engrafted a supernatural spirituality, which is

¹ 1 Cor. ii. 9.

called sanctifying grace. The understanding and will are endowed with the supernatural virtues of faith, hope and charity, and all other supernatural virtues which correspond to those that are natural. The possession and exercise of these supernatural faculties constitute the supernatural state, or the supernatural life and being of a Christian. For the present we will confine our attention to the basis of the supernatural life, namely, sanctifying grace, and consider what it is, in its nature and effects.

What, then, are we to understand by sanctifying grace? Grace, in the strict sense of the word, is a supernatural gift, something given to us by God to enable us to reach our supernatural end. Sanctifying grace is, pre-eminently before all, such a supernatural gift; but looking at it more closely we see it to be a spiritual and supernatural quality conferred on our soul, to which it adheres like a radiant light, that makes it beautiful, brilliant, supernaturally spiritual, like unto God, and pleasing in His sight. Sanctifying grace does not consist in the fact that God is well pleased with a soul, or that a soul is in favour with Him, but it is an actual, physical quality residing in our soul which makes us pleasing to God. This quality does not naturally belong to the soul, but is superadded, and can be removed without its ceasing to exist in the natural order. Finally, according to a well-grounded opinion of theologians, it exists in the soul, not as a power which can be used like faith or charity, but as the principle and foundation of all supernatural powers. It is not immediately attached to the understanding and will, but to the substance of the soul. Its higher spirituality raises the soul to a supernatural condition and existence, ennobles it fundamentally, and makes it like to God by giving to it a supernatural spirituality such as God Himself possesses. Without being active in itself, it is the principle and permanent basis of all

supernatural activity. Therefore it is always described in Scripture as something permanent and abiding in us, as, for instance, the "abode,"¹ and the dwelling of God in us.² Thus it is an instance of the truth that whatever God does He does solidly and perfectly. By sanctifying grace He makes us supernatural and like unto Him, and raises and sanctifies us not only in our actions, but in the very depths of our soul and being.

Now, what are the effects in us of sanctifying grace? First, it imparts to us a higher life—a supernatural and divine life. Hence Scripture calls the communication of sanctifying grace a new and second birth, and being born again of God.³ By our first and physical birth we received a natural life; by our second and spiritual birth we became Christians and received a supernatural and divine life. He, therefore, who does not possess sanctifying grace is dead as far as regards the supernatural, and has only the name or appearance of being alive.⁴

The second effect is our adoption as the children of God. The communication of sanctifying grace is a new birth, whereby we are born again of God and become His children. Filiation presupposes a resemblance and a communication of nature. We are the children of our parents because they communicated to us their human nature, and we are related to them by blood. Sanctifying grace produces something analogous to this between God and us. Our spiritual filiation has no merely extrinsic adoption as its principle, but is based upon something actual and physical which is given to us and is in us, and this something is sanctifying grace. It is really in us, as we have already seen, and is what constitutes the supernatural image of God in us, and, as it were, com-

¹ John xiv. 23.

³ John i. 13; iii. 3; James i. 18; 1 Peter i. 23.

² 1 Cor. iii. 16.

⁴ Apoc. iii. 1.

municates to us the divine blood and the divine nature. This is why St. John says:¹ "Behold what manner of charity the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called and should be the sons of God". And again:² "He gave them power to be made the sons of God". This also is why he calls sanctifying grace "the seed of God" abiding in us.³ St. Paul says: "God hath predestinated us unto the adoption of children through Jesus Christ unto Himself, according to the purpose of His will: unto the praise of the glory of His grace in which He hath graced us in His beloved Son".⁴ He also calls the Divine Redeemer "the first-born amongst many brethren".⁵ St. Peter describes this mystery in still more forcible words when he says:⁶ "He hath given us most great and precious promises, that by these you may be made partakers of the divine nature," *i.e.*, by sanctifying grace. Following our Lord's example we call God "our Father".

We are, therefore, children of God in quite a different manner from that in which adopted children belong to those who have adopted them. That kind of adoption has nothing intrinsic about it, and is a merely extrinsic relationship; but by the divine adoption through sanctifying grace a real quality is communicated to our soul, which constitutes in us a supernatural image and likeness of God, and a participation in the divine nature and divine life. Our filiation, however, differs from the Sonship of Jesus Christ in this, that He is the truly begotten of the Father, and has really received from all eternity the divine nature from Him; whereas we were at first purely human, and received later a participation in the divine nature, not by its actual communication to us, but by a created supernatural resemblance to it,

¹ 1 John iii. 1.

² John i. 12.

³ 1 John iii. 9.

⁴ Eph. i. 5, 6.

⁵ Rom. viii. 29.

⁶ 2 Peter i. 4.

effected by sanctifying grace. The divine adoption differs again from the natural filiation among men, in which not only an imitation of nature, but nature itself is communicated. From this point of view there is more reality in natural filiation, though sanctifying grace surpasses it by a long way in other respects, namely, by its excellence and sublimity, for it is spiritual, not material. Moreover, there is nothing natural about it, but it is something supernatural which keeps man in a state of constant union with God, and imparts to him a life, the source of which is in God—a truly divine life which makes him, in a sense, one with God.

A third effect of sanctifying grace follows from the divine adoption, namely, the right of inheritance. Because a child is by his nature an extension and, as it were, a continuation of the life of its father, it has the natural right to whatever its father possesses, as St. Paul says: "and if sons, then heirs also".¹ But in what does our inheritance consist? It is the same as that of the Son of God, it is the glory of the kingdom of God in heaven and on earth—glorification in the bosom of the Father and participation in His essential glory, power and happiness; and here below the Church, the kingdom of honour. In a word our inheritance is that for which our Lord prayed when He said: "And now, Father, glorify Thou Me with Thyself, with the glory which I had, before the world was, with Thee".² Such is our inheritance. Here below it is a share in and the enjoyment of all the treasures of the Church, for the preservation, protection and increase of the divine life within us; and in the next life it is the kingdom of heaven. Even as we participate in the divine nature of the Son of God by our adoption in sanctifying grace to be the children of God, so shall we be possessors with Him of His

¹ Rom. viii. 17.

² John xvii. 5, 24.

glory, and shall be rulers with Christ in heaven. He Himself promises this: "I dispose to you," He said, "as My Father hath disposed to Me a kingdom, that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom".¹ St. John wrote these incomparable words: "We are now the sons of God, and it hath not yet appeared what we shall be . . . we shall see Him as He is".² We shall, therefore, be happy as He, the Divine Saviour, is happy, and shall be with Him in the bosom of the Father. "I will give to him to sit with Me in My throne."³ "And the glory which Thou hast given Me I have given to them, that they may be one as We also are one. . . . Father, I will that where I am they also whom Thou hast given Me may be with Me, that they may see My glory which Thou hast given Me because Thou hast loved Me before the creation of the world."⁴ In truth this is an inheritance with which no other can be compared; an inheritance such as only God in His wisdom and goodness could have devised; an inheritance as great as God Himself.

Such is sanctifying grace, though only superficially considered. St. Peter was undoubtedly right when he said that God had given us most great and precious promises. Does not sanctifying grace contain all that the heart of man could conceive or desire? For what is it that man desires, except life, beauty, riches, honour, and, above all, joy and happiness? And all these are comprised in the possession of sanctifying grace. Take, first, life—a divine life such as that of God Himself, wherein He Himself lives substantially, and in which we participate by sanctifying grace. Then take beauty—nothing exterior or perishable, but interior and spiritual, being a reflection of the divine beauty, so that God sees Himself in us and is well pleased. Such are the life and beauty of sanctifying

¹ Luke xxii. 29, 30.

³ Apoc. iii. 21.

² I^o John iii. 2.

⁴ John xvii. 22, 24.

grace ; but furthermore there are its riches. Who can conceive the riches which it contains? One single degree of sanctifying grace surpasses all the treasures of the natural order, and even of the angelic creation. The Angels, in spite of all their superior power, could not attain to it, because sanctifying grace belongs to a higher order. Moreover it brings with it a whole treasure of virtues, faculties and aptitudes which can be made to grow and spread more and more, and thus offer to us the means of gaining endless merit by good works. The value, therefore, of sanctifying grace is equal to that of the whole kingdom of heaven, and the degree of it which we obtain here below will be the exact measure of our glory in heaven. Even as the son of a king wears emblazoned on his breastplate the arms of all the principalities and dominions of the kingdom, so does sanctifying grace shine with all the splendours of the kingdom of heaven. And, lastly, what about its dignities? Sanctifying grace is the principle of them all. By it we become truly holy, not only in our will, efforts and actions, but in the very depths of our nature, by a likeness and communication of the holiness of God. By sanctifying grace we become the citizens of the kingdom of Christ here below and members of His Mystical Body, friends, family and children of God, and princes of His kingdom. The gift of sanctifying grace is, in a kind of way, the continuation in us of the eternal generation of the Son of God, in consequence of which the Father extends to us the love He has for His only-begotten Son. By it, therefore, we obtain a true kinship with God. Is not this honour and dignity sufficient?

All these good things are contained in sanctifying grace. It is the essence of Christianity, its crown, end and consummation, and all that is most precious in it. Its dignity is so great that we cannot possibly understand it here below, and shall not be able to value it,

even in a measure, till we are in heaven face to face with God, whose image we bear in our hearts through it. God alone knows the full value of sanctifying grace. One day St. Catherine of Siena was meditating devoutly on our Divine Lord's love for us, and was unable to understand how He could have done and suffered all He did for such wretched creatures. He appeared to her, and, having showed her the beauty of a soul in the state of grace, said: "See, was not it worth My while to live, suffer and die for anything so beautiful as this?"

2. Let us now consider what is the part of the Holy Ghost in the communication of sanctifying grace. The communication of grace is a special operation of the Holy Ghost. This can be seen, first, by the titles which Scripture gives to Him. It calls Him the Spirit of sanctification.¹ Sanctification is effected by sanctifying grace; for this very grace is essential, supernatural holiness: all else is either its necessary complement and overflow, or else merely accessory and accidental. We become actually and essentially holy by sanctifying grace. The Holy Ghost is also called the Spirit of grace,² and the Spirit of adoption of sons.³ He is called the life-giving Spirit, and this does not refer merely to the natural, but especially to the supernatural life of the soul which consists in the state of grace. Yea more, to distinguish Him from the other two Divine Persons, He is called the Holy One and the Sanctifier. It follows that the Holy Ghost must intervene in an especial manner in the communication of grace, and that it is right to ascribe this work peculiarly to Him. So St. Basil says: "From the Holy Ghost proceed an unceasing joy and a likeness to God. To be made like to God is the zenith of man's desires."⁴ The Council of Trent says: "The

¹ Rom. i. 4.

² Heb. x. 29.

³ Rom. viii. 15.

⁴ St. Basil, *De Spir. S.*, c. 9 (*sub fin.*).

efficient cause of justification is the merciful God, who freely purifies and sanctifies us by signing and anointing us with the Spirit of the promise".¹

Actually, justification and the communication of sanctifying grace are regularly effected by the holy sacraments, the end of all of which is either the communication of or the increase of sanctifying grace. Now we have already seen how the sacraments are the chosen instruments of the Holy Ghost for the sanctification of man, and how He Himself contributes to this end. Besides, the acts of preparation which a man must make before receiving the sacraments are made solely by the assistance of actual grace, which is, again, as we shall soon see, an operation of the Holy Ghost. It will be shown in a future meditation how the Holy Ghost communicates Himself together with sanctifying grace. Thus the whole mystery of grace is accomplished in us by the Holy Ghost.

The real reasons why we ascribe justification to the Holy Ghost are not far to seek. Justification is, as we have seen, a merciful and absolutely gratuitous favour, and the adoption of us as children by God. It is, therefore, a work solely of His infinite love, as the Apostle says: "Of His own will hath He begotten us by the word of truth".² The Holy Ghost is the Person of love and goodness in the Godhead. Hence there is a special reason why all extrinsic works of love and goodness are attributed to Him; and this must be said especially of the work of justification, because it is the foundation of the whole spiritual life. What the Father destined for us from all eternity, what the Son won and merited for us, that does the Holy Ghost impart to us. Sanctifying grace stands further in an especial relation to Him because it is the very essence of supernatural spirituality and sanctity, and, therefore, impresses on us in a peculiar manner

¹ *Sess.* vi. 7.

² James i. 18.

the image of the Holy Ghost, whose personal attribute it is to represent the spirituality and sanctity of God, even as it is that of the Son to represent His wisdom and beauty. Thus sanctifying grace confers on us a peculiar likeness to the Holy Ghost and places us in a closer relation to Him. Finally, the Holy Ghost, being the last in order of the Divine Persons and the completion of the processions within the Godhead, can communicate His divine nature to no other Person, thus, so to speak, to reciprocate the love of the Father and the Son for Him. Hence—if it be permitted to us to say so—His love overflows from the Godhead down on to creatures and communicates the divine life and divine nature to all who are capable of it, by impressing on them a most wondrous likeness to Himself, and by drawing them like children into the bosom of the Father and to the side of the Son, and into His own heart. He thus, by raising the angelic and human natures, draws the whole of creation into a real and living union with the Godhead, who is the Principle of all life and happiness. Even as the goodness of the Holy Ghost was the reason why God communicated Himself outside Himself, so also is it He who brings back everything to God. He is both type and cause of the communication of grace to men and Angels.

3. Having seen what sanctifying grace is, what treasures and splendours are hidden in it, and how it constitutes the very essence of a Christian, let us now endeavour to draw some conclusions from what has been said.

It follows, first, that we ought to prize this treasure above all things, for what can be compared with it in value or excellence? Honour, nobility, riches, beauty, life—it is all this to us in the supernatural order. It can compensate us for anything and everything, and

nothing can compensate for it. We must, therefore, love and value it more than any earthly possession.

Secondly, sanctifying grace teaches us to appreciate and esteem ourselves. We are unjust if we regard ourselves only as wretched, despicable, fallen creatures, not worthy to be even considered by God. If we are in possession of sanctifying grace we have that within us which raises us above the low level of creation—something which makes us worthy of love and honour in the eyes of God—something which makes us even like unto Him, for we bear within us the character of children of God. We may venture to approach Him as a child approaches its father, with confidence and assurance, and the consciousness that we belong to Him. This, indeed, comes from no merit of our own, and is a pure gift of grace, but none the less it is a reality. This consciousness of what we possess should comfort and support us in all the mishaps and misfortunes of life. So long as we possess sanctifying grace we are not so poor, despised and unfortunate as we appear to be. If all our earthly plans and hopes are shattered we still retain the greatest of all possessions and the most glorious hope, which compensates for all besides—namely, grace here and glory hereafter.

Thirdly, it follows from what has been said that we ought to do all we can to preserve sanctifying grace. Let us never forget that it is solely by it that we are real, living Christians, and that neither Redemption nor the Church will avail us unless we die in a state of grace. God has given us this priceless treasure: He leaves it to us to keep it. Its loss means sin and enmity with God. Even as the possession of grace gives us every conceivable good thing, so does its loss lead to an abyss of poverty, misery, degradation and misfortune. If we lose it, then are we indeed truly miserable, for we have lost everything, even God.

Let us, therefore, watch over grace and guard it as our greatest treasure. We cannot compare it with any other treasure, and we dare prefer nothing to it; so let us on no account run any risk of losing it. Rather than do so let us give up everything else. Nothing will be too difficult or arduous if we can only save it, or, if we have lost it, win it back.

Fourthly, let us not forget the Holy Ghost, who communicates sanctifying grace to us. Let us thank Him from our hearts for this gift. He could not, in His goodness, have done anything better for us than make us children of God, brethren and fellow-heirs with Christ. Even as we see in Him the Giver of this treasure, let us also see in Him its Guardian and Defender. We carry the treasure in brittle vessels, the paths along which we travel are very perilous, our enemies are many and strong, and we ourselves are poor and weak; so let us give our hearts over into His care, and pray often to Him for His almighty protection. We may, for this purpose, make use of the beautiful words of the Sequence for Whit Sunday: *Veni, Sancte Spiritus*—Come, Holy Ghost, *Veni, lumen cordium*—come, light of hearts. Sanctifying grace is the true light of our hearts, and without it all is dark. *O lux beatissima, reple cordis intima tuorum fidelium*—O blessed light fill the hearts of Thy faithful. *Sine tuo numine nihil est in homine, nihil est innoxium*—without Thy divine presence there is nothing in man—nothing save sin and its stains.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE CHRISTIAN VIRTUES.

SANCTIFYING grace is in itself an inestimable treasure, the greatest proof of God's goodness to us. But it is even more precious to us on account of the other treasures which accompany it, wherewith it enriches us. Among these are, first of all, the virtues, which constitute a most important part of the spiritual life. Let us consider: (1) what the virtues of the spiritual life are; (2) in what way we owe them to the Holy Ghost; and (3) what practical conclusions should be drawn by us.

1. What, then, are the virtues of the spiritual life? In order to understand this better it is necessary to consider the real meaning of the word "life". Life is self-movement towards an end by virtue of a principle of force indwelling in the being that moves itself. We therefore live when we can move and act, not like a machine or by an extrinsic impulse, but of ourselves, by an intrinsic determination and power. In order to act rationally we must make a conscious effort to attain the end of our activity and movement. Our end is heaven—the vision and possession of God in beatific love. This end is far away from us, and we must, therefore, make an effort to attain it, and must ourselves move towards it. The movement by which we approach our everlasting end consists in good and supernatural actions, which may be called the steps we take towards our end. What must we do to make our actions conformable to that end?

Exteriorly, we require direction, or, in other words, we must know the way in which we have to move; and this direction is given us by the Commandments of God. Interiorly, we require powers to live in conformity with the Commandments. Of these powers understanding and will are the chief, and are, as it were, the motive force of our actions. But this does not suffice. These elementary and most important powers, if they are to be easy, permanent and natural in action, must be assisted by certain auxiliary powers. The permanent auxiliary powers which dispose the understanding and will to good actions, by preparing them for and inclining them to their exercise, are called virtues. Even in the natural life we find an inclination or facility, either innate or acquired, for certain works, by reason of which we perform them with pleasure and confidence. The virtues are permanent powers and aptitudes which assist our understanding and will in their operations, and impart to them a certain facility and readiness in regard to the same. They are not the understanding and will themselves, but rather properties inherent in them, which enable us to act morally well and according to reason. When these powers are given in a supernatural manner, and when their action does not relate to what is purely natural, they are called supernatural virtues.

The supernatural virtues differ from the natural, first, in their end, which is supernatural, and secondly, in their origin. We do not come into the world with them, for they are infused into our soul with sanctifying grace, and remain in or depart from the soul together with it. Faith and hope are exceptions to this rule, for they remain in the soul unless cast out by the sins directly opposed to them. Thirdly, they differ in their effects; for while the natural virtues only enable us to do good works

with greater assurance, facility and pleasure, the supernatural virtues are necessary to make it possible for us to effect supernatural acts in a way agreeing with their dignity; because for actions of a supernatural order there must be a corresponding supernatural power. Supernatural virtues do not merely temper our powers, but raise them to an efficiency of an altogether higher order. Sanctifying grace elevates the substance of our soul, and the virtues do the same as regards its powers. Sanctifying grace gives us a supernatural existence; the supernatural virtues enable us to act supernaturally. Natural virtue enables us to know and strive after God, but only by the light of reason and by natural powers; on the other hand, by supernatural virtues we strive after the vision and possession of God as our last end. These virtues are, therefore, implanted by God in our nature in the same way that a foreign shoot is engrafted on a branch. Even as in that case the fruit is very superior to that of the natural tree, so in our case the acts which spring from these virtues are eminently superior to our nature, being of a different, higher and altogether divine kind.

But do we really possess such supernatural virtues? Undoubtedly. That we do is the common teaching of theologians, and is based on the testimony of Scripture. The latter often makes mention of virtues given to us with the supernatural life. St. Paul draws special attention to the most important of them, namely, the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity;¹ and in the following passages also enumerates other virtues: "God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of sobriety".² "But thou (Timothy) pursue justice, godliness, faith, charity, patience, mildness."³ The Book of Wisdom has this beautiful passage: "If a man love justice, her

¹ 1 Cor. xiii. 13.

² 2 Tim. i. 7.

³ 1 Tim. vi. 11.

labours have great virtues; for she teacheth temperance, and prudence, and justice, and fortitude, which are such things as men can have nothing more profitable in life".¹ The Council of Trent, moreover, says that justification is effected by the reception of grace and gifts; and adds that in justification the virtues of charity, hope and faith are together infused into our souls.² We cannot, therefore, doubt the existence of these virtues in our souls. Nevertheless, the reason why God implants them in us is not precisely because we should be incapable of making any supernatural acts without them. God can supply the absence of these powers, as, for instance, when charity is revived in a soul which is in a state of mortal sin; in which case the so-called actual grace supplies what is otherwise wanting. The general reason why the virtues are given us is in order that everything in the supernatural life should be well disposed and carried out harmoniously. In the natural life we possess, in the more important faculties of our understanding and will, a permanent and intrinsic power of action; and we have, moreover, many auxiliary powers which render action more easy and pleasant. God willed that the same thing should exist in the supernatural order, so that our higher life might be disposed and organised in harmony with the natural life. For grace to act in us perfectly and harmoniously it must have auxiliary powers at its disposal, and without this indwelling aptitude and perfection something would be wanting to the dignity and sublimity of the supernatural state. Natural generation, which carries with it special aptitudes of the natural order, would, in that case, be superior to the supernatural regeneration which makes us children of God.

Hence the profusion and multiplicity in which the virtues are given to us. In the natural life we are

¹ Wisd. viii. 7.

² Sess. vi., cap. 7.

endowed with a great variety of talents and faculties which accord with the diversity of our necessities and obligations; and we find the same thing in the supernatural life. We can distinguish a great multiplicity in the supernatural and infused virtues, and this in more respects than one. If we examine the faculties of the soul which are aided by the virtues we can distinguish virtues of the understanding and virtues of the will; and these last can be divided into those which relate to the higher, and those which relate to the lower will, or sensitive appetite. If, however, we look at the object towards which the action is directed we find, first, God, and then all creation. In other words, we find virtues which refer immediately to God, our last end, and which we call theological virtues, and we find others which are connected with things that are outside God and are meant as means by which we are to reach Him. These last are called non-theological, or, more commonly, moral virtues. The theological virtues are the more excellent, both because they come directly from God, or are, in other words, essentially supernatural and infused by God, and because they refer immediately to God who is their principal object and their sole motive; and thus they effect—as far as is possible here below—the union of man with God, his last end. By faith man's understanding adheres to God as Truth itself, while by hope and charity his will turns to Him as the sovereign Good.

The moral virtues are, as has been said, distinguished from the theological by their relation to something outside God Himself, such as our duty towards Him, or our duty towards our neighbour or ourselves. Secondly, God is not their immediate and intrinsic motive, which is, rather, their own goodness, beauty and reasonableness. They are called moral virtues because they imply a rectitude of will, and

consequently place man in a position to act morally well or even meritoriously. As the objects of these virtues are so diverse, and in many cases—such as chastity, virginity and magnanimity—so difficult, God has shown His wisdom in a striking manner by adding auxiliary powers to man corresponding to such difficulties. The non-theological virtues are comprised in four cardinal virtues, which, with their accessory and auxiliary virtues, embrace all the objects of moral action and endeavour. The whole moral life consists in the rectitude of the will and in conformity of action with our eternal end. For this three things are necessary. First, a man must know with his understanding what would, under any circumstance, correspond with and lead to this end. Secondly, he must, in every respect, observe order and rectitude in his actions. Thirdly, he must defend this order and maintain it against his passions. His passions are of two kinds: some tend to deter him from what is lawful and right by the fear of difficulties and danger, and the others do the same by a love of pleasure and attachment to created objects. There exist, therefore, four groups of virtues: prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance, with the accessory and auxiliary virtues which accompany them, support them and come from them. This constitutes a whole system of powers, by the possession of which man is completely equipped for an ordinary Christian life; and there is no obligation which these virtues will not enable him to fulfil.

These virtues are infused into our souls with sanctifying grace, not to remain there as a dead possession, but as living instruments of life. They quicken and increase the supernatural life, whether by enabling us to do good, or by perfecting us by their increase, development and perfection. The virtues can grow in our souls, as we may learn from Holy Scripture.

Our Lord Himself distinguishes different degrees of virtue. In speaking of the faith of the centurion, for instance, He said that He had found none so great, no not in Israel.¹ Again, He told the Canaanite woman that her faith was "great";² whereas, in another passage, He speaks of faith which was no greater than a grain of mustard seed.³ From this it is evident that there exists a greater or a lesser degree in acts of virtue, and consequently in the virtues themselves. This greater or lesser degree depends on us, for the Apostles exhort us to grow in grace by growing in virtues.⁴ We also know that there will be different degrees of glory in heaven, and that this difference will depend on the difference in the degrees of sanctifying grace. Grace can, therefore, grow, and the virtues will grow with it; for they are only its organs and instruments. When a tree increases in strength its boughs and branches do the same. The Church explicitly prays for an increase of faith, hope and charity;⁵ and for a saint to be canonised it must be proved that he possessed and practised the virtues to an heroic degree, or that, in other words, he possessed heroic virtue. It, therefore, follows that virtues can be increased together with sanctifying grace, and this increase is effected by every supernatural good work done in the state of grace, by every meritorious action. With grace the whole system of virtue, or, in other words, our virtues, become more stable, more powerful, more decided and more noble, as well as more lasting in their effect, and with it they are being continually raised to a higher state of perfection. This perfection does not consist only in a greater facility in the exercise of individual virtues, but especially in that of the virtues which are

¹ Matt. viii. 10.² Matt. xv. 28.³ Luke xvii. 6.⁴ Col. i. 11; ² Peter iii. 18.⁵ Coll., thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

required by our state of life. If a man practises virtue in accordance with the duties of his state and with perseverance under all circumstances, it can be safely said that he possesses perfection, for such a result presupposes not only the possession of virtue, but its possession in no ordinary degree.

The fruits and effects of virtue are, first, virtuous actions and good works, for which the virtues give us capacity, inclination and facility. Good works grow from virtue like flowers grow from a branch. The second fruit is merit, which results from good works, and corresponds with an increase of sanctifying grace, and of all the virtues which have their root in it. From merit proceeds the everlasting fruit of increase of glory. Even here below there springs from the strenuous practice of virtue the wondrous blossom of sanctity, which consists in the possession of virtues to an heroic degree, or, in other words, of heroic virtue. The saints are simply canonised virtue. This may suffice as regards the life of virtue with its full bloom and development. But—to look at the other side—supernatural virtues and sanctifying grace are lost only by mortal sin. Faith and hope are exceptions to this rule, for they remain even when grace is lost, and are destroyed only by those sins which are directly opposed to them. Supernatural virtue can either grow or be lost, but it can never be diminished.

2. We must now pass on to the consideration of the relation which the Holy Ghost has to the virtues. They all come to us from Him. He is the Principle of these excellent powers, because He is, as we have seen, the Principle of the supernatural life and of sanctifying grace in us—and, therefore, of the virtues which are infused into our souls with it. It is because they hold such a high place and have so great a significance in the life of grace that the virtues are rightly ascribed to the Holy Ghost who “divideth to every

one according as He will".¹ They are a necessary and fitting adornment of the children of God, and place us in a position, as such, of leading a divine life.

This applies to the virtues in general, but Scripture shows us the relation of the Holy Ghost to them in detail. Our Lord Himself calls the Holy Ghost the Spirit of truth,² who would bring to their minds all the things He had taught the Apostles,³ and would teach them all truth ;⁴ and by these words He describes the peculiar relation of faith to the Holy Ghost. The Divine Spirit not only instructs us in faith, as we have seen, by the Church and her office as teacher, but also by His grace in our hearts, as is intimated in the collect of Pentecost. Further, the Holy Ghost is called the God of hope : " Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing ; that you may abound in hope and in the power of the Holy Ghost ".⁵ Charity is described as pre-eminently the work of the Holy Ghost : " The charity of God is poured forth into our hearts by the Holy Ghost who is given to us " ;⁶ and as St. Paul says, in his glorious enumeration, with charity we possess all other virtues.⁷ Does not the Apostle, moreover, tell us that joy, peace, patience, benignity, goodness, longanimity, mildness, modesty, continency and chastity are fruits of the Holy Ghost ? And are not these the most important among the virtues ?⁸ Have we not already seen that all that is most pure, most moral, most penetrating, most strong in men is to be attributed to the Holy Ghost ? Let us recall what has been said in former meditations about the grand examples of virtue in the Old Testament, and bear in mind that we find the same virtues, only in a higher order, in the New Testament. And

¹ I Cor. xii. 11.

⁴ John xvi. 13.

⁷ I Cor. xiii. 4 *sqq.*

² John xiv. 17.

⁵ Rom. xv. 13.

⁸ Gal. v. 22, 23.

³ John xiv. 26.

⁶ Rom. v. 5.

all this is by Holy Scripture attributed to the Holy Ghost.

It is, therefore, the Holy Ghost who gives us these virtues and implants them in our soul; and it is the same with their exercise, growth and perfection. It is not enough to have these virtues in our soul; they must be cultivated, turned to account and strengthened by good works. But for this—as we shall see in future meditations—there is necessary the light of grace, its sunshine and dew, its interior impulse and vigour. These are the work of the Holy Ghost in the soul. Thus we can see that His action embraces the whole life of virtue.

3. Let us now draw some conclusions from what has been said. We shall have taken to heart, at least, the importance of the virtues to our spiritual life, and our first conclusion will be the necessity of possessing them. They are to the spiritual life very much what talents and skill are to the natural life. They are more; for they are, rather, what our hands, feet and other organs are to the physical life. Without the virtues we could not lead a moral life, we could not take one step towards our everlasting end, nor attain to it by good works. These virtues are, therefore, absolutely necessary to us, and constitute the real, interior nobility and value of our souls. Moreover, our likeness to God rests on them, for they are to us what His attributes are to God, and through them we become like to Him.

We have these virtues, for they were given to us in Baptism with sanctifying grace, and our second conclusion must, therefore, be to make use of them, put them into action and practise them by making acts of virtue and doing good works. They were given to us to work with and gain merits by them. If we do not exercise these virtues and convert them into acts we shall be burying a precious treasure, and leaving unused a talent acquired with great difficulty. Were

we to do this we should justly deserve the reproof and punishment of the slothful servant who buried his talent in the ground instead of trading with it. Not one day should pass without our turning to account and using this treasury of powers given to us by drawing forth sweet notes from them as from a musical instrument, to the glory of God and our own utility and profit.

Thirdly, we must strengthen and perfect the virtues. We can, as we have seen, do this. Each act of virtue increases sanctifying grace, and with it the powers of virtue, in the same way that every tree which bears fruit bears with it the germ of a new tree. Certain limits are fixed to the growth and development of a tree, but no limit is set to the growth of virtues in a man's soul. By the grace of God he can always grow in virtue and profit to himself as long as he is here below, and can raise himself to the perfect sanctity of heaven above. This is to the glory of God, for, as St. John says, the justification of the saints is the fine linen, glittering and white, with which the Spouse of God is clothed.¹ For us there can be nothing more to be desired than the highest virtue. Any trials we may experience in the practice of it and in the effort to increase it cannot be compared with the joy of possessing it, or with the profit and glory it will bring us here and hereafter. By virtue alone do we make ourselves the instruments of God's hand for the glory of His Divine Majesty and the salvation of souls.

Let us then rise from virtue to virtue. The first means of accomplishing this is to practise virtue in the various daily circumstances which present themselves to us in our state of life, or else as a result of our zeal. Prayer is the second means. By it we learn to know the nature, necessity, beauty, nobility and utility of virtue; by it we dispose our hearts to ascend by steps

¹ Apoc. xix. 8.

in the place which He hath set.¹ By prayer we discern our opportunities of obtaining virtue, as well as the grace necessary to sustain us in our efforts and render them successful. Finally, we have within our reach a most powerful means of obtaining virtue, namely, devotion to the Holy Ghost, who planted these precious treasures in our souls, and who will also give the increase. Let us be thankful to Him for His inexhaustible goodness which has loaded us with these gifts; and let us place our whole spiritual life and all its efforts under His protection. The Lord of Hosts will bless us, and grant us success, so that we shall climb from virtue to virtue, and attain to the grace and glory prepared for us. As in the beginning the firmament and stars, the animals and plants came forth under the fructifying influence of the Holy Ghost from the bosom of the earth, from the waters and from light, so from the germs which He has planted in our hearts there will blossom forth the wondrous flowers of Christian virtue, to the joy and glory of the Holy Ghost.

¹ Ps. lxxxiii. 6.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE LOVE OF GOD.

WE must devote a meditation to the peculiar relation of the Holy Ghost to charity. Let us, therefore, examine : (1) what charity is ; (2) what is the relation of the Holy Ghost to it ; and (3) what conclusions are to be drawn.

1. What, then, is charity ? It is a theological virtue by which our will attaches itself to God as in Himself the highest good, and makes us love everything else for His sake. This brief definition must be further explained by showing the object of charity, together with its motive, qualities, obligations and effects.

The object of charity is primarily the uncreated goodness and beauty of God in Himself, and, in the next place, after Him, His creatures, Angels and men, in so far as they are His images and the communications of His goodness and beauty. The motives of charity are solely the goodness and beauty of God, which are sublimely superior to anything created, infinite and worthy of all love in themselves, and at once the highest good and last end of all creatures. The motive of charity distinguishes it from hope, which is also a theological virtue of the will, and has also for its object the goodness of God, not, however, for its own sake, but because it is our good and the object of our beatitude. The love of hope is concupiscible, because it considers itself ; but charity has no such consideration, and adheres to God only because He is infinitely beautiful and good in Himself, and, therefore, worthy

of all love. Every divine attribute, whether intrinsic or extrinsic, being infinite, can be the object and the motive of charity.

The unique and necessary quality of charity is its sovereignty. The goodness and beauty of God surpass everything, and nothing can be compared with them. Therefore love for God must be greater than love for anything else, and we must value Him more than anything, wish for His glory above anything, and place Him before everything. In other words we must attach ourselves to God with the love which is due to Him as our sovereign good and last end. This is the love of appreciation, which resides in the will and not in the emotions. No doubt that God is absolutely worthy of the love of the emotions, but this is not made a matter of precept, simply because feeling does not rest with us. Our Lord says:¹ "He that keepeth My commandments he it is that loveth Me"; and love, therefore, considered in its essence, has to do with the will and not with the emotions. The commandment of love: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind, and with thy whole strength,"² is to be understood in this sense. The precept refers essentially to the will, and bids us, first, to love God above all things, so far, at least, as to prefer His love and friendship to any creature, to be ready to sacrifice everything rather than lose Him, and to avoid everything that could rob us of Him, namely, mortal sin and its proximate occasions. In the second place, the commandment imposes on us the duty of making occasional acts of charity in order to refer ourselves and all that we have to God as our last end.

The sins directly contrary to charity are hatred of God, which is the gravest possible of all sins, and sloth

¹ John xiv. 21.

² Mark xii. 30.

and tepidity, which consist in a disgust of what concerns the honour and glory of God when it involves any trouble or annoyance to ourselves. The effects of charity are peace and joy. If a man love God above all things he must have both interior and exterior peace. What is peace but tranquillity and stability of good order? Joy is the delight a man feels at obtaining what he most loves and desires, and when he rests happy in its possession. This is effected by charity and through charity, which unites man to God, his sovereign good and last end. Joy, moreover, proceeds from friendship and the relish of it. Now, love between God and man is always the love of friendship. Scripture describes it as such: "I will not now call you servants," said our Lord; "but I have called you friends"¹; "Wisdom is an exquisite treasure to men, which they that use become the friends of God . . . she maketh the friends of God and prophets".² So it is in fact. Friendship consists in a certain likeness and equality, and also in a mutual knowledge, reciprocity of love and benevolence. Equality is established by sanctifying grace which communicates to us the divine nature and makes us children of God. Charity is always united to sanctifying grace, and the one presupposes the other. As for mutual knowledge and reciprocity of charity there can be no doubt. God knows and desires our love, and tells us that He loves us, both by His words and actions.

2. Such, in brief, is charity. Now let us see what is the relation of the Holy Ghost to it. Everything in charity leads us back to Him, and nothing more than it brings Him to our minds. The two have one name in common; for love is one of the personal names of the Holy Ghost. Moreover, in their origin, their nature, their life and their effects they are analogous. Love

¹ John xv. 15; Luke xii. 4.

² Wisd. vii. 14, 27.

is a production of the will, and proceeds from it—nay more, it is its chief power. It is the highest and most perfect action of the will by its entire surrender of itself to the sovereign good. In like manner the Holy Ghost proceeds from the will and mutual love of the Father and Son, being the expression, result and Person of that most holy love of God for Himself which issues in the communication of the divine nature to a third Person. Further, He is called the “Holy Spirit” and the “Gift,” and thus is the type of our motive in loving God, or of the unselfish devotion of ourselves to Him as our sovereign good. Besides, charity, more than any other virtue, adheres to God as its last end; and in its desire to unite itself to Him as closely as possible refers and directs everything to Him. In this, also, we easily see an analogy to the Holy Ghost; for to Him, as the Person of love, all the exterior works of God are attributed, and it is His peculiar work to draw the creature to God as its last end by the charity which He infuses into it.

The Holy Ghost is, therefore, the Principle of charity in us also, and by this charity He, in a certain sense, communicates Himself to the creature. This is why Scripture especially ascribes the communication of charity to Him: “The charity of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Ghost who is given to us”¹; “Your members are the temple of the Holy Ghost”.² The conviction as to this relation of the Holy Ghost to charity has always been so strong that some theologians have maintained that the Spirit is the immediate Principle of charity in us, which He produces without the co-operation of any infused virtue. But this is not so. There is, as we have already seen, a permanent capacity of love in our soul, and it is this permanent capacity, combined with sanctifying grace, which is the principle of the peculiar

¹ Rom. v. 5.

² 1 Cor. vi. 19.

union of the sanctified soul with the Holy Ghost and of His presence in it.

Finally, the Holy Ghost is the Principle of the increase and perfection of charity, because He works in us by actual grace, makes us capable of acts of charity, and thereby increases to a degree our capacity of loving. We can see in the saints what a power of love He can breathe into a human heart. St. Paul describes this power in his magnificent passage on charity: "Who then shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or persecution or the sword? . . . But in all these things we overcome because of Him who hath loved us. For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor might, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." ¹

Such then, broadly, is the history of charity; such is the manner in which, proceeding from God and being poured on to this earth by Christ through the Holy Ghost, it takes possession of the hearts of poor, timid, frail men, and makes them mightier than earth or hell or heaven. Its power is revealed to us in the confessors, martyrs, apostles and, indeed, in all the saints, who, at times, bear marvellous tokens even on their mortal bodies. Such is the power of the love of the Holy Ghost!

3. What follows? There are two conclusions which we must draw: first, that we must devote ourselves to the acquisition of charity; and, secondly, that for this end we must turn to the Holy Ghost.

First, therefore, we must take pains to acquire charity. And why? Because there exists nothing better than charity. It is the highest and most ex-

¹ Rom. viii. 35 *sqq.*

cellent of the virtues. As a theological virtue it is superior to any moral virtue, and even among the theological virtues it is greatest, because it presupposes faith and hope, and attaches itself perfectly to God. It is the root, soul, end and perfection of all virtues, because it unites us to God as our sovereign good, and turns all other virtues and their acts to the same end.¹ Charity by itself makes beatitude sure, because in it are contained and fulfilled all the commandments, and because, moreover, it is always accompanied by every other virtue. By itself it justifies us and makes us the friends of God, nay more, it is, in itself, the communication to us of the love of God and of beatitude here below. It leads the way, in joy and delight, to God, and while it reaches to heaven it yet remains unchanged. Only one thing may, perhaps, be better than charity, and that is the light of the glory of heaven, which is, after all, only its completion and perfection. Charity is a queen, right royal and divine in her origin, a queen on account of the regal retinue of virtues which accompany her, a queen by reason of the authority with which she rules all virtues both here below and in the everlasting beatitude of heaven. "Truly, love is an excellent thing, a great good indeed," says the author of the *Imitation of Christ*.² She is the treasury of the riches of God and man!

Secondly, God desires our love, and binds us to it by precept. He desires that we should love Him more than anything else. The commandment of love is the first commandment, and embraces all that of which man is capable. We are bound to love God with our whole heart, with our whole will, with our under-

¹ See what St. Paul says about charity in 1 Cor. xiii. It almost seems as if he considered all other virtues merely as attributes of charity. See also 1 Tim. i. 5; Rom. xiii. 10.

² Bk. iii., chap. v.

standing, with our feelings, and with all the powers and faculties of body and soul which are subject to our understanding and will.¹ Such is the commandment of love. We might ask why God desires to be loved in this manner by us. We answer that though He most certainly does not need our love His holiness and justice demand it. He knows that He is the one sovereign and infinite good, and that He Himself is worthy of all love, and, therefore, He requires that all rational creatures shall love Him above all things and Himself alone. But, it may again be asked, how is it possible to fulfil this precept perfectly? No doubt we shall never be able to love God as He is worthy of being loved, for He is infinitely good and, therefore, worthy of infinite love, which we are incapable of giving. God alone can love Himself as He is worthy of being loved; and we must be satisfied with loving Him as much as we can. In this life we shall never be able even to think of Him without interruption, far less make unceasing acts of divine love; this will be possible in heaven only. Yet, even here, we can give our hearts to God in such a way as to be unwilling even to desire anything contrary to His love; and we can, as far as our state in life allows us, keep our mind fixed on prayer and the things of God instead of letting them dwell on the affairs of this world. In realising these two aims the perfection of charity consists as far as it can be attained in this life.

Thirdly, it is fitting and right that we should love God above all things for His own sake, because He is in Himself infinitely worthy of love. What does man love? His fellows. And what does he love in his fellows? All that is good and beautiful. Now, we find this in God to an immeasurable extent. The very words of the precept which bids us love God with

¹ Mark xii. 30.

all our powers, and above all that we can think of as worthy of our love, help us to conceive how good, how beautiful, how worthy of all love He must be. An almost incredible story is related in a very ancient book. There we are told that once upon a time such Beauty appeared upon the earth that kings and people went to war with each other for the possession of a mere footprint which this Beauty left in the sand. Is this credible? It is the pure truth. This Beauty is nothing else than God. He created this world which, with its fairness and riches, is, as it were, a footprint of Him; and the possession of this earth and its temporal riches is the cause of all the strife and war, all the invention and efforts of men. He who succeeds in snatching for himself a considerable fragment of this earth considers himself most renowned and most fortunate. Now, if the mere footprint is so beautiful and so desirable, what must it be with the image and, above all, with the countenance of Beauty? From the contemplation of the beauties of creation we should build a bridge whereby to reach the beauty of God. What height and majesty, what power and might, what wisdom and holiness we find bestowed on the several orders of creation! Whether they be visible and material or invisible and spiritual, whether natural or supernatural, they lead us on, through the angelic world, to the very throne of God made Man and of His Virgin Mother. A mere fraction of this magnificence is sufficient to lead our hearts captive.

What if there were a Being who embraced in Himself all this and infinitely more; who is, in fact, power, wisdom, goodness and beauty personified? Oh, what happiness to be allowed to love such a Being! But what if this Being knew us, wished us well, loved us in spite of our misery? What if He desired to communicate Himself to us, to make us thereby blessed for all eternity? Would it be too much if we gave Him

all the love of which our hearts are capable, even if they were capable of a million times more love than they are, and collected in themselves all the love of all other creatures and even of this Being Himself? This Being is our God, who is quite inconceivably worthy of all love. He knows and loves us, and desires our love. He is so near to us, and we are bound to Him by so many ties of nature and life that it would be impossible not to love Him. Let us only follow the attraction of our hearts which draws us to what is good and beautiful, and if we search honestly we shall find that it leads us to God. How true are the words of Scripture: "The commandment that I command thee this day is not above thee, nor far off from thee . . . it is in thy mouth and in thy heart that thou mayest do it"!¹ Whenever we contemplate the beauties and charms of creatures let us say to ourselves: "If His creatures are so lovable, what must God be!"

Such are some of the motives for loving God. But to learn to love Him with our whole hearts, and to make progress in this science of the saints, it is necessary to enter the school of the Holy Ghost. He is the best Teacher of this science because He is Love itself. How does He train and educate us in love? First, by prayer. Prayer is intercourse with God, and by it we learn to know Him in His glorious attributes and wondrous works, in His innumerable benefits to us of creation, preservation, sanctification and perfection in His Church through our Lord Jesus Christ. A frequent and lively recollection of the benefits of God is one of the ways most recommended for kindling love in our hearts. But, you may say, does not this dwelling on His benefits gradually slip into paying attention to ourselves? Is not this grateful love a love of concupiscence, and is it not God's benefits

¹ Deut. xxx. 11, 14.

which we love and not God Himself? No; in the consideration of God's benefits we must look not only at the gift conferred on us, but also at the love whence it comes. This love is a divine quality, and shows us the goodness of God; and love for His goodness is pure love. Love depends greatly on the measure of our knowledge. We are influenced most deeply by anything which strikes our senses; and, therefore, the benefits of God are a most potent means of kindling love within us. By them the love of God is brought home to us, within our reach, so that it is almost as if we could touch it. Furthermore, by prayer the grace of God works in us, and grace is the warmth and light of charity, as it is of all the supernatural virtues. The sacraments also lead to the same end, for by them the Holy Ghost makes us advance in charity. All the sacraments either restore us to the state of sanctifying grace or increase it in us; and some, as, for instance, Holy Communion, have the increase of grace for their special effect.

Secondly, the Holy Ghost trains us in charity by leading us to a life of renunciation. The love of God can grow in us only at the expense of self-love. The love of God and the love of self are for ever struggling in our souls; and the more we die to the love and enjoyment of self and of creatures the more does the love of God grow within us. Every impulse of the Holy Ghost tends to detaching us from ourselves and from creatures. Thus—to quote only one instance—chastity and virginity are most powerful means of increasing charity.

Thirdly, the Holy Ghost makes use of sorrows and adversities to increase the love of God within us. Nothing disgusts us with the world, purifies and raises our hearts to God, or tends to make us heavenly-minded more than crosses and misfortunes. They are the crucible of love; and the highest state of charity

is to desire them. The love of the Cross is the most beautiful and most distinctive mark of the divine origin of perfect Christian holiness.

Finally, the Holy Ghost teaches us to love by loving. A man learns to read and write by reading and writing, and in like manner he learns to love by loving. We must, therefore, be most careful to elicit acts of love from our hearts frequently during the day. By such acts we protest that we are willing to suffer and give up everything rather than displease God. Or else these acts serve to remind us of His beauty and goodness, and lead our hearts to rest in the thought of them. To think of God whenever we see anything beautiful on this earth, and to try to perfect any such representation of divine beauty ; to rejoice in the divine attributes and to desire the glory and honour of God ; to direct everything we do to love of Him and do it for Him ; to conform ourselves to His will with childlike love ; to suffer in all that attacks His honour and rejoice in the contrary are their fruit. Lastly, these acts stir us up to spread as far as is possible the knowledge of God and His interests, and to unite ourselves with all the labours and sufferings which are undertaken for His glory, and with all the love which is offered to God on earth and in heaven, especially with that which flows from the Hearts of Jesus and Mary, and with the love wherewith God has loved Himself from all eternity. Let us see special occasions for acts of charity when temptation or dangers assail us, when we meet with some unusual joy or some unusual sorrow, when we are called on to renew either our good intentions or our sorrow for sin, when we say the Pater or the Gloria, or when we approach the sacraments. Each one of these acts increases and strengthens the impetus of our love and brings us nearer to God.

St. Thomas distinguishes three degrees in the growth of charity. The first consists in the state of

struggle to maintain charity against mortal sin; the second is attained when charity, being strengthened against its enemies, is more especially engaged with its increase by the practice of good works; and the third degree is when its more particular aim is to attach itself to God and rest in Him. The development of charity is analogous to progress by movement. When we first move we leave our starting-point, then we approach the goal, and, finally, we rest in it. Though it is true that, during all its phases, charity has simultaneously to maintain itself against its enemies, to grow, and to move nearer to and depend on God, nevertheless each one of these endeavours particularly characterises one or other of its degrees.¹

Such is the school of charity which is under the direction of the Holy Ghost. Let us enter His school and try with all our powers to make what progress we can in it. Let us often ask the Holy Ghost to increase charity within us, and keep us alive until we have obtained it in full measure. Moreover, in our practice of charity let us never forget to give an especial and explicit place to devotion to the Holy Ghost, for He is the Author of charity and is Love itself.

Let us love God. "Nothing is sweeter than love, nothing stronger, nothing higher, nothing more generous, nothing more pleasant, nothing fuller or better in heaven or earth; for love proceeds from God and cannot rest but in God, above all things created."² Let us, therefore, love Him with all our hearts as long as we are here below. In heaven, it is indeed true, we shall love God more closely and more strongly than here, but not with the same freedom. There we shall not be able to help loving God; here the choice is

¹ *Summa Theol.*, ii., 2, q. 24, a. 9.

² *Im. Chr.*, bk. iii., chap. v.

given us. That is the precious privilege of charity here, whereby it gives glory to God and value to the acts of our love. Let us make use of the short time given us here below to love God freely and, above all things, for His sake.

CHAPTER XXIV.

BROTHERLY LOVE.

BROTHERLY love, or the love of our neighbour, naturally connects itself with the love of God. We will briefly examine: (1) in what it consists; and (2) what are its relations to the Holy Ghost.

1. As we saw incidentally in the last meditation, the theological virtue of charity has for its object, not only God, but also our neighbour. Brotherly love belongs, therefore, to the love of God, and with it we love our neighbour as ourselves for the sake of God.

The object of this love is our neighbour, and by this term is to be understood every rational creature—be he angel or man—who shares our nature, origin, and the vision of God as its last end, and not as yet excluded from it irrevocably. We can and must love even the body of our neighbour, because it is a part of his nature, and, as such, is destined to have a share in the possession of God in a happy eternity. The motive of brotherly love is, in the last instance, the goodness of God in itself, and as far as we discern its communication and image in our neighbour, whether in the order of nature or in the order of grace and glory. We, therefore, love our neighbour because He comes from God, belongs to Him as His creature, and is, to a certain degree, like Him. The more excellent and glorious this communication of the divine nature is in our neighbour, so much the more worthy is he of our love.

The measure of our love for our neighbour is not

the same as that of our love of God, *i.e.*, above all things and above measure, for its measure is that of an ordinate love of ourselves. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," are the words of the commandment.¹ Thus the measure of love of which our neighbour is worthy is not infinite as it is in the case of God, but finite and limited as it is in our own selves. Therefore ordinate love of ourselves is not only the condition of our love of our neighbour, but also its type and measure. From the measure of our ordinate love of self proceeds the order of our brotherly love. As we are bound to love God more than ourselves, because He is the Source and Sum of all goodness, so we are, under certain circumstances, bound to prefer the common good to our own, because, after God, it is the source of our own good. Further, as we are bound to prefer salvation to all temporal advantages, so also, under certain circumstances, we are bound to prefer the spiritual good of our neighbour to any temporal advantage to ourselves, and are bound, if necessary, to sacrifice it for the other object. Again, as we do not love ourselves for the sake of any other creature, so we must not love our neighbour for the sake of our own convenience. Finally, as we rightly love ourselves, in the first place, on account of the natural union and unity which exists within ourselves, so in the works of our brotherly love we must first consider the bonds of relationship, citizenship and vocation. Setting aside these considerations, we should have a greater love of appreciation or esteem for those who represent God more perfectly to us, whether by their superior virtue or by their authority over us. In short, if our love is to be holy, we must love our neighbour for the sake of God; if it is to be well ordered, we must take for our measure the ordinate love of ourselves; and if our love is to be

¹ Mark xii. 31.

true and sincere, it must be without any consideration of advantage to ourselves.

Interior love for our neighbour is actuated by our esteem for him as an image and child of God and a member of Jesus Christ, and likewise by a heartfelt benevolence and sympathy which will make us wish him everything that is good, rejoice in his happiness, banish envy and jealousy from our hearts, and protect him from harm, be he friend or enemy, acquaintance or stranger, fellow believer or heretic and infidel. Our interior love expresses itself in prayer for him; and our love is shown exteriorly by the maintenance of peace and concord, the avoidance of offence, the practice of the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, fraternal correction and zeal for souls.

The following motives will serve to make us zealous in acts of brotherly love. Take, first, the fitness of such love. The fitness consists primarily in this, that we love our neighbour for God's sake because he belongs to God. If we love God it follows that we must love what belongs to Him, what He loves, and what He desires that we should love. This is also the reason why it is enjoined on us to love our enemies, and is a sufficient explanation of such love: for the sake of my friend I can be kind to a man who is for other reasons repugnant to me. The fitness of brotherly love consists, furthermore, in his likeness to ourselves. We have the same nature, the same origin, the same end, and we are travelling along the same road towards that end. We are children of the same family, we have one home and one table both here below and in heaven above; we are members of one Body. To despise, hate or persecute our neighbour is the same thing as to despise, hate or persecute ourselves.

The second motive of brotherly love proceeds from the first, and is accentuated by the command of God. It is necessity. We know what our Lord thinks of the

commandment of love. He proclaimed it anew, He removed it from the obscurity and narrowness of the Old Law, and said that it is *like* the commandment to love God.¹ He calls it "His commandment,"² or, as St. James puts it, a "royal law";³ and He reduces all other commandments to that one of love.⁴ In fact, our Lord describes the precept of love as the epitome of the Law, and makes it the mark of His disciples.⁵ He enforces it still more strongly by His own example. "Love one another as I have loved you" were His words,⁶ and *His* love for man was to be the rule and measure of *our* love for our neighbour. The Incarnation, the Crib, the Cross, Holy Communion, these ought to suffice to show how vast was the measure of His love. We should, therefore, be always ready to love our neighbour, for we shall not be wasting our love upon an unworthy object. It is worth remembering that our Blessed Lord did not show love to us only, but also to all those who are our neighbours. He considered them worthy of His love; and is it not dangerous to reject and despise what God values so greatly?

The third motive is the excellence of brotherly love. It has almost the same excellence as the love of God. In it everything is divine; for, like all supernatural virtues, it comes from God and is communicated by Him. Its object, it is true, is our neighbour, but solely on account of his relation to God, and, therefore, St. John says: "He that loveth not his brother whom he seeth, how can he love God whom he seeth not?"⁷ The motive of brotherly love is God Himself, and, therefore, it belongs to the theological virtue of charity, which combines a twofold object in one motive, and embraces both in one supernatural faculty of love. It is a most sublime and beautiful communication of God

¹ Matt. xxii. 39.² John xv. 12.³ James ii. 8.⁴ Matt. xxii. 40.⁵ John xiii. 35.⁶ John xiii. 34.⁷ I John iv. 20.

to men, by which He, as it were, pours His love for creatures into the heart of man. God does not only love Himself for Himself, or His goodness absolutely ; He also loves His goodness as it can be communicated, with all that belongs to it. Above all, He loves the rational creature, the child of His predilection, and this love He communicates to us by brotherly love. God loves Himself and the creature with the same love ; so in like manner must we love God and our neighbour with the same love.

Brotherly love is excellent, not only in what it is, but also in what it does and suffers. Love is the deepest, the strongest faculty which man possesses. It must act ; and, in fact, exists fully only by action. It must express itself, communicate itself, and, what is more, it must sacrifice itself and suffer. The reason of this we find in the fact that there is in man what we may call another love which is opposed equally to the love of God and brotherly love, namely, inordinate self-love. It is only at the expense of this that the other love can thrive and act. The more we love our neighbour and exercise brotherly love the more must we renounce ourselves and die to self. It is of the nature of brotherly love to strive and sacrifice ; it involves combat, violence, immolation. Without these qualities it could not deserve so much praise or win so many privileges. How else could it be placed so close to the love of God, how could it be so pleasing to Him, and be rewarded by eternal life ? Brotherly love is, indeed, most excellent and noble, and like the love of God it is regal in its riches and virtues.¹ We may call it a blessed angel of God which He sends forth from His heart to dwell in this vale of tears, so as to relieve the weight of misery and misfortune on this earth, and spread beauty, peace and joy in their stead.

2. The relation of the Holy Ghost to brotherly love

¹ 1 Cor. xiii. 4 sq.

has been partly considered in the last meditation. He is the Person of Love, and, therefore, the Principle, End and Model of all supernatural affection and union in charity.

Union in charity presupposes the faculty of supernatural love. This faculty, like every other supernatural power, proceeds from the Holy Ghost, and the more so in this case because charity has a peculiar relation to His Person, and because the love of God and the love of our neighbour, looked at as faculties and motives, are one and the same love. This faculty is perfected by actual grace, which incites us to love our neighbour supernaturally for God's sake; and of this actual grace the Holy Ghost is the Principle. Finally, the commandment laid on us incites us most powerfully to love. The commandments were written by the Finger of God—the Holy Ghost—"not only on tables of stone, but on the fleshy tables of the heart".¹ Moreover, how would brotherly love be possible without patience, longanimity, peace, self-renunciation and self-forgetfulness? And are not all these virtues fruits of the Holy Ghost?²

The Holy Ghost is also the model of brotherly love. He proceeds from the love which God has for Himself and for the creatures who are His image, and, consequently, cannot dwell in our hearts without infusing brotherly love into them. He loves creatures, not for their own sake, but as the communications of the divine goodness. In like manner we must love our neighbour for God's sake, and must love God in our neighbour. Finally, as He loads His creatures with benefits from pure love and inclination, without any selfish motive, so must we love our neighbour with no regard for our own interests or pleasure. The Holy Ghost is the most pure and sublime model of love.

Lastly, He is the end of brotherly love. If we love

¹ 2 Cor. iii. 3.

² Gal. v. 22.

our neighbour it is not that our love should stop at him; if we do good to him, it is not merely that his necessities may be supplied; we do it in order that our love for God may be perfected, and that He may be glorified in everything and through everything. Now the Holy Ghost is both God and Love, and as He, proceeding from the Heart of God, embraces all creatures, illuminates them with the fire of His love and converts them into a holocaust for the love and glory of God, so the sparks of love which are emitted by individual hearts, by being drawn into the great furnace in which the Holy Ghost consumes the whole of creation with Himself in the bosom of the Eternal, help in their way and according to their power to promote and complete His work. The Holy Ghost is love, which, as St. Augustine so beautifully says, joins all the Angels and servants of God in a bond of holiness, uniting them to us, and drawing us with them into union with God.¹ Our love should tend to this same end.

This is what the Holy Ghost proposes to effect by His operations and guidance. For this end He works everywhere, by night and by day, to overcome by His grace our individualism, sterility and egotism, and unite us heart to heart in affection and benevolence. On this account He is continually moving men to join in greater or lesser associations and societies. He is the Principle of all social life, whether in the family, the Christian State or the Church; and within these greater societies He inspires the formation of various other unions for good and holy objects. It is striking how often Scripture alludes to the love and unity which prevailed in the first Christian flock at Jerusalem.² It is as if when the Holy Ghost descended on the Church He left behind Him a track of the fire of His love which, in the first days of

¹ *De Trinit.*, lib. 8, c. 12.

² Acts ii. 44; iv. 32.

Christianity, was actually visible in its effects. This brotherly love must, indeed, have been powerful, for the task it had to accomplish was the overthrow of the hostile elements then existing in the customs, nationalities and manners of the time; and this it effected to such an extent that it could be said with truth that there were "neither Gentile nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian nor Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ all and in all".¹ The brotherly love and universal charity which have been the characteristic of Christianity, and, as it were, its national spirit and the fruit of its existence, are the work and victory of the Holy Ghost. There was nothing of the sort in the world before. Just consider what a variety of splendid works and organisations have been called into being in the Church by the spirit of brotherly love, in the shape of charitable institutions, associations and confraternities for the exercise of spiritual and corporal works of mercy! The grandest expression of this spirit is to be found in the religious orders, the invariable object of which has always been either the salvation of souls or the relief of the necessities of the body. It is significant how many hospitals and charitable institutions of the middle ages were dedicated to the Holy Ghost.

Whenever there springs up a great desire for social life and work, or whenever it increases and shows signs of new life, it is a sure mark of the intervention of the Holy Ghost. So also is it when charity, not content with doing the good that comes in its way, tries to perpetuate its work by permanent institutions; or again when charity, looking beyond its immediate object, has a wider aim and seeks the common good; or yet again when the love of our neighbour becomes love of the Church, which, with her powerful organisations and effective methods and instruments, embraces all

¹ Col. iii. 11.

mankind, raises it from its spiritual and corporal miseries, and impresses on creation the image of the glory of God. Love for the Church, zeal to promote her ends, spread the faith, maintain and increase ecclesiastical unity, and a childlike unchanging attachment to the head and chief pastor of the Church, are among the most glorious fruits of that charity which the Holy Ghost has kindled in the heart of man. If we have acquired such a charity, we love our neighbour, not as an individual, but as a member of the one Body, for which all its members work, and which, in return, is the most powerful means of making brotherly love active, fruitful and conducive to the glory of God. How often does the great and glorious idea recur in Scripture that we are all members of the same Body of Christ, and that all our acts of virtue and all the gifts of so-called gratuitous graces are intended for the building-up of that Body!¹ The boundless zeal for souls which we find in St. Paul and in all other true apostles is the expression of the action of the Holy Ghost, who desires that heaven and earth, Angels and men should be one in the kingdom of charity, to the glory of God.

Such, then, is brotherly love. Its necessity forces itself on us, and its excellence is incomparable. It is an integral part of the love of God and a sure sign of the presence of the Holy Ghost within us. If we wish to grow and excel in this important and beautiful virtue let us pray to the Holy Ghost and submit our hearts to His gentle guidance. He desires one thing, namely, to draw hearts together and bring them ever nearer to Him in the goodness and love of God.

¹ Rom. xii. 5 ; 1 Cor. xii. 12 ; Eph. iv. 11, 12, 13.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY GHOST.

THE Gifts of the Holy Ghost are a further equipment and adornment of the sanctified soul. We will, therefore, consider: (1) the nature of these Gifts; (2) their number; (3) their importance to us.

1. What are we to understand by the Gifts of the Holy Ghost? They are special and supernatural faculties and capabilities given to the soul, whereby it may the more easily and securely follow the impulses of the Holy Ghost. Their nature is, therefore, analogous to that of the virtues. Like them the Gifts do not consist in merely transitory acts, but are permanent powers and aptitudes placed at the soul's disposal in order to enable it to exercise supernatural acts. This is almost the unanimous teaching of theologians and spiritual writers. Holy Scripture, whenever it alludes to the Gifts, speaks of them as in a certain sense remaining and abiding in the souls of the just. Isaias, speaking of the Divine Redeemer, says: "And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him: the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of fortitude, the Spirit of knowledge and of godliness, and He shall be filled with the Spirit of the fear of the Lord".¹ We are, furthermore, told in St. John's Gospel that the Holy Ghost was to "be in" and "abide with" the Apostles.² The same thing applies to His Gifts, which always

¹ Isa. xi. 2, 3.

² John xiv. 17.

accompany His presence. A special capability corresponds with each mode of activity ; and, as these acts are most important to life, it is fitting that there should be permanent faculties of the soul corresponding with them. This is why permanent faculties are received for the practice of the virtues.

The Gifts are, in this respect, analogous to the virtues ; but they differ from them and show themselves to be distinct from them in other respects. Whereas the virtues—or, at least, faith and hope—can remain in the soul when grace is lost, the Gifts, with charity, are driven out by one mortal sin. Moreover, faith and hope will cease in heaven, whereas there is nothing contradictory in the idea that the Gifts will remain in a glorified soul. The Gifts suppose the virtues and sanctifying grace ; but they differ from the virtues in their end. Whereas the virtues hold forth the possibility, and place us in a position to be able to follow the dictates of faith and reason, the Gifts serve to make the practice of virtue easy, prompt, pleasant and willing. Their nature and significance consist in this, that they make us ready, supple and docile as regards the impulses of the Holy Ghost. Lastly, it can be said that they differ from the virtues by having, under certain circumstances, a different object from theirs, or, if their object be the same, by rendering it more sublime. The acts of the Gifts contain all that is higher in the activity of the spiritual life, and in this sense theologians maintain that the Holy Ghost Himself acts on us and in us in a peculiar manner through His Gifts, and makes us docile to their influence. It is true that He works through the virtues, but not so powerfully or efficaciously, nor in such a way as to make well-doing easy, pleasant and secure. Facility in well-doing bears the stamp and character of the action of the Holy Ghost so evidently as to constrain us to ascribe it especially

to Him ; and, on the other hand, it is so important for the practice of virtue and good works that it is reasonable to suppose that a special disposition for this facility is infused into the soul of the just. Consequently the effects of the Gifts are seen in a susceptibility, a docility, a marked readiness to receive the divine inspirations. In a word, the effect of the Gifts is the perfect exercise of the spiritual life. Through their influence knowledge carries with it not only the power to do, but this power expresses itself in action—and, moreover, in action performed with facility and pleasure. Such seem to be the chief characteristics of the Gifts that constitute the principal difference between them and the virtues.

2. Let us now consider how these Gifts are divided. Their object being to facilitate the work of the virtues, it follows that they must be closely connected with them, and must assist, through them, the principal powers of the soul—the understanding and the will. Some of the Gifts, therefore, refer to the understanding and some to the will. The first four Gifts, understanding, knowledge, wisdom and counsel, perfect the intellect ; while the others, the fear of God, piety and fortitude, perfect the will. But the Gifts may be differently divided in reference to the various virtues. Understanding, knowledge and wisdom facilitate the exercise of faith, while wisdom also acts on charity ; the Gift of counsel assists the virtue of prudence, holy fear assists temperance, piety assists justice, while fortitude perfects the virtue of the same name. They are, it may be said, the spirit of the virtues, and this is why they facilitate their exercise. The whole sphere of natural powers is glorified and raised to a higher activity in a double way—first, by the supernatural virtues, and again by the Gifts.

3. We ought to prize these Gifts in general ; first, because of their necessity. We must all possess

them, and they must extend their influence to all, because we have all to work out our salvation. It is true that the virtues, under the impulse of actual grace, make this possible to us. But the mere possibility is not sufficient, unless there be added a facility—and this facility belongs to the domain of the Gifts. Moreover, salvation sometimes demands special and difficult works—it may be said that such come necessarily into the lives of all Christians—and to cope with these there is needed a special influence of the Holy Ghost. To perform these greater actions we must possess corresponding faculties. According to St. Thomas, God leads and guides us by a twofold light: first, by the light of reason, and then by Himself, in so far that He gives us special illumination and a special impulse. This action of God constitutes a higher principle of knowledge and action, and it is but fitting that there should be in the soul special faculties corresponding with this special action of God. If a student demand higher instruction of his teacher he must possess a corresponding capacity for understanding such instruction. Such is the case with what we are considering. The Holy Ghost is an incomparably sublime Teacher, who incites us to a higher mode of action, superior to that corresponding to our rational nature, even though it be endowed with the ordinary virtues. Consequently, if we enter His school we must bring to it special faculties. If God desire to act upon a creature in an extraordinary manner, it is fitting that there should be at His disposal what we may call a special kind of machinery enabling the creature to receive the divine influence easily and readily. The Gifts of the Holy Ghost constitute this machinery, and, therefore, become simply necessary for our salvation.¹

¹There is a great difference among theologians as regards the peculiarities of the Gifts of the Holy Ghost and what distinguishes

From this there follows a second motive for esteeming and loving the Gifts, namely, their excellence. The Gifts suppose the virtues, the perfect practice of which is, in fact, the reason of their existence, and so far the virtues, and, more especially, the three theological virtues, are more necessary and important than they. Nevertheless, under another aspect, the Gifts attain to a higher state than they, and, if they are behind the theological virtues in dignity and excellence, they surpass the non-theological virtues intrinsically in both these qualities; because the non-theological virtues do not unite us to God so perfectly, whereas the Gifts entirely subordinate the soul to God and unite it to Him, and make it ready and willing for everything that is good. Moreover, the Gifts have a pre-eminent value and a special excellence even in respect to the theological virtues. They complete, raise and perfect the exercise of these virtues, as we have already seen. Often, as we have again seen, acts are performed under the influence of the Gifts which would have been impossible to ordinary virtues. They put us, therefore, in a position to practise virtue in a degree far surpassing anything ordinary.

One thing there is which gives them an indisputable excellence. By the Gifts our actions are entirely subjected to God and belong to Him; and perfection consists in the complete subjection of man to God and in his union with Him. It can, therefore, be

them from the virtues. According to some, the Gifts enable us to correspond with actual grace; while others reduce their influence to efficacious graces. Others confine their influence to extraordinary works, or to those which are due to a special inspiration of the Holy Ghost. We have adopted the opinion which has been exposed above, more especially because in the two chief points which we have elucidated it agrees with the teaching of St. Thomas. These two points are—that the Gifts are simply necessary for salvation and that they make men docile to the impulses of the Holy Ghost (St. Thom., i., 2, q. 68, a. 1, 2).

affirmed that the Gifts and their action constitute the higher and more excellent spiritual life. The acts of the higher spiritual life, which we call mysticism, have mainly for their principle the Gifts of the Holy Ghost, and thereby these Gifts become the most glorious manifestation of grace and the virtues, and the noblest and most sublime organs of the supernatural life. We find them all expressly and individually in our Divine Saviour. They were one of the precious adornments of God made Man, whereas some of the virtues, such as faith and hope, found no place in Him, because the immediate Vision of God, which He always enjoyed, excluded them as unnecessary. The possession of the Gifts adds, therefore, to the excellence of sanctifying grace, and gives us an especial likeness to our Lord.

We owe these great and wonderful Gifts to the Holy Ghost, and on this account we call them the Gifts of the Holy Ghost. They are, as it were, the hidden threads, the delicate touches wherewith He guides the sanctified soul whithersoever He will. By the help of the Gifts the soul rises with facility even to the summits of Christian perfection. This is why the masters of the spiritual life compare these Gifts to the wings of a bird and to the sails of a ship, such a mode of impulsion being incomparably more swift than that of walking or rowing with oars. By these Gifts the soul becomes the chosen instrument of the Holy Ghost, who is its Teacher and Master. What a soul can become under the direction of such a Teacher is self-evident.

When we consider all these things we certainly find cause to renew our gratitude to the Holy Ghost who has adorned our soul with such precious gifts that there seem to be no limits to His generosity. The most valuable part of these Gifts is the way in which He draws us near to Himself by them, and makes Himself the Teacher of our souls. Surely, therefore,

it is fitting that we should make use of these Gifts which were infused into our soul with sanctifying grace and the virtues, and that we should turn them to profit by seeking perfection and following the inspirations of the Holy Ghost.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE GIFT OF UNDERSTANDING.¹

WE have seen that the Gifts of understanding, knowledge and wisdom perfect the intellect and also the virtue of faith. Let us now consider the Gift of understanding by itself, and examine: (1) in what it consists; (2) what is its value and peculiar excellence; (3) by what means we can perfect it in us.

1. The best way to understand the nature and properties of this Gift is to take as our starting-point the truth that it perfects faith, and then proceed to examine the exact way in which this virtue is aided and facilitated by it. Faith is the virtue by which we firmly hold to be true whatever God has proposed to our belief, and that because He has revealed it. If, therefore, we believe something to be true, not because it is evident to our reason, but because God has revealed it, it is necessary that we should have a clear understanding of both the words and meaning of what has been revealed, so that we may know what it is that we are called on to believe. A clear understanding, both of words and meaning, is necessary, chiefly as regards supernatural and revealed truths, which are above our natural comprehension, and are, in themselves, obscure and incomprehensible.

¹ There is much that is vague and undefined in the doctrine of the Gifts of the Holy Ghost; and the explanation of the individual Gifts in the following pages must be regarded in the light of an essay more than anything else. We have for the most part followed Suarez: *De gratia*, lib. ii., c. 17 sq.; lib. vi., c. 10.

Therefore, the first thing in which we require the aid of the Holy Ghost is in obtaining certainty as to the meaning of revelation, so as to be sure that it bears such and such a meaning and no other, and is to be understood in such and such a sense and no other. The Holy Ghost gives us this certitude by the Gift of understanding. This Gift sheds such a clear, searching and extraordinary light on the meaning of revealed truth, and makes the signification and connection of ideas on which the truth rests so plain that it does give us a certitude that what God has revealed bears such and such a sense and no other. The Gift, therefore, does two things for us: first, it sheds a clear and divine light on the meaning of revelation, and, secondly, it gives us certitude as to that meaning. The Gift contains a real judgment even though it relates only to the meaning.

This is how the Gift of understanding assists the virtue of faith. It is a first condition of the science of salvation, for it is necessary that we should have a precise grasp of what we are called on to believe and do. As a simple act, the Gift of understanding precedes faith, though imperfectly; but as a perfect act and permanent faculty, it follows faith and the infusion of sanctifying grace and charity. If any one is called to the faith he needs the assistance of the Holy Ghost to understand rightly its teaching. This is what we may call the dawn of the Gift of understanding, and is a passing grace of illumination in the sense in which our Lord said these words: "Every one that hath heard of the Father and hath learned cometh to Me".¹ Natural penetration, powers of perception and education contribute to this end in conjunction with the light of faith and grace; but these natural faculties do not suffice, and especially fail to give certitude as to the meaning of revelation;

¹ John vi. 45.

for very often even the wording of revealed truths is ambiguous and obscure.

A right understanding of the meaning of revealed truths belongs essentially to this Gift; but its scope extends farther than this. In a wider sense it embraces an extraordinarily sublime and penetrating apprehension of the truths of faith, and by its divine light we see that the ideas which express the truths, far from excluding and contradicting each other, really fit together and refer to some higher truth, though, to the natural understanding, they might seem to contradict each other. It is evident how much the light of this Gift assists faith, how many difficulties and prejudices melt away before the precise meaning which it gives to revelation, and how it facilitates a more profound comprehension of it. Thanks to it we acquire a greater readiness and skill in explaining to ourselves and to others the meaning of the truths revealed, and of expounding them and making them clear by means of similitudes and examples. Facility and assurance in grasping the real meaning of Scripture belong to this Gift. We have an example of this application of it when our Lord, as He walked to Emmaus with the two disciples, "opened their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures".¹ He was alluding to the same effect of the Gift when, earlier in His ministry, He spoke to His disciples in the contrary sense, and said: "Are you also without understanding?"²

Lastly, this Gift has an application to the practical life. St. Thomas says: "The Gift of understanding refers primarily to faith, but it also extends to everything which in any way relates to faith; and this comprises the actions of the practical life, so far, that is to say, as they are governed by the eternal truths, by the knowledge of which this Gift

¹ Luke xxiv. 45.

² Matt. xv. 16.

perfects the intellect. In fact, understanding apprehends the eternal truths, not only as they are in themselves, but as they afford a rule for our actions." ¹ What are we to understand by this influence of the Gift on practical life? Above all, a clear light and a just notion, conception and idea of all that concerns the science of salvation, as, for instance, a clear and just idea of the nature, ends and methods of the spiritual life, the requirements of morality and the virtues and duties of our state. Such is the essence of the Gift.

2. The importance of the Gift consists, above all, in its effect on our powers of understanding. It purifies our conception of the mysteries of faith, brightens it, and thus facilitates the act of faith. Nothing is more important to knowledge than this. Knowledge begins by an idea, and the clearer and sharper this becomes so much the greater is our knowledge. To have even some clearness in our spiritual conceptions is so great a gain that no natural advantages can be compared with it.

The Gift of understanding has a peculiar value for theologians, preachers and catechists, and is most important to those whose duty it is to proclaim and defend the faith, instruct others in the spiritual life and watch over the integrity of revealed doctrine. It is also turned to profit for others by the so-called gratuitous graces of interpretation and the word of wisdom and understanding. Without this Gift it would be impossible for Christian instruction to be followed by any considerable results. But, on the other hand, it is only necessary to remember the object of the Gift to see what priceless advantages it must confer on preachers and teachers of the spiritual life. Its effects are perceptible when a Christian teacher exhibits any peculiar acumen, lucidity and simplicity, whereby he

¹ *Summa Theol.*, i., 2, q. 58, a. 4; ii., 2, q. 8, a. 3.

gains the hearts of his hearers and benefits them. However, the Gift of understanding can be equally well found in the most simple among the faithful; and the Holy Ghost inspires such as these with an apprehension of the mysteries of faith which surpasses in lucidity and acumen the understanding of the greatest theologians. The possession of this Gift explains a certain sensitiveness, often found in the simple-minded, which makes them detect, almost instinctively, errors, falsities and anything uncatholic in religious opinions, and fills them with aversion from them. We find an example of this in St. Vincent de Paul who, in spite of their subtleties, at once detected the heresy of the Jansenists. Blessed Andrew Hofbauer gave the name of "the Catholic scent" to this instinct. He himself possessed an extraordinary skill in discovering any unsound tendency in either literature, art or science. These faculties, especially when found in the uneducated, cannot be due to mere intelligence and faith, and can be explained only by a special assistance of the Holy Ghost through His Gift of understanding.

It is scarcely necessary to point out the importance of this Gift for meditation and contemplation. It is, in fact, the starting-point of the contemplative intellect, and the only basis on which it can rest if it desire to search without danger into the mysteries of God, and tread without injury along the perilous paths of supernatural science. Clear, precise, defined ideas are necessary to contemplation, otherwise the compass to which the contemplative trusts will only misguide him, and all his mental endeavours will be fraught with danger. The Gift of understanding throws open to him the gates which lead to an interior knowledge of the truth, and will be his sure guide. What an advantage to him and also to others! A person thus

supernaturally illuminated is as the light of the world and the salt of the earth to his fellow-men!

It is easy to understand that a light so clear and certain must exercise a beneficent influence on the will as well as on the intellect, and must affect the practical science of salvation. Under the certain guidance of the Gift of understanding the will gains assurance, liberty, energy and zeal. It is not possible but that the Gift should produce interior joy and gladness, for every discovery in the field of supernatural truth must cause spiritual delight. We know, for instance, what real joy we experience when the mere sense of a passage in Scripture, with its various bearings and applications, dawns on us. But the most important way in which the Gift affects the will is by the decision, firmness of faith and loving surrender to it which it produces in us. Timorous hesitancy and pusillanimity become impossible to us. No more can doubt or scandal be caused to us by apparent rashness and seeming contradictions in doctrine, for—as we have seen—the Gift not only throws light on the meaning of revelation, but gives a certainty as to its precise meaning. This certitude is often so strong that it could not possibly proceed from a man's weak ideas as to the motives of faith, but must come from something higher, namely, from a special illumination of the Holy Ghost. This firmness and clearness of the will extend to the whole moral life. The scope of the will's action extends under the guidance of the understanding, endowed with such lucidity and certitude. Whence comes the indecision of the will more often than from the inexactitude, imperfection and haziness of our ideas? As soon as we have been able to arrive at a lucid and luminous conception we are, as it were, set free from prison, the fetters of our difficulties fall off from us, and virtue seems to be easy and practicable. Little by little, under the influence of the light of

this Gift, there grows up in our interior life a peculiar rectitude, reasonableness and fixity of purpose in the practice of virtue. These are the marks of a really spiritual man.

3. It is not difficult to see the value and importance of the Gift of understanding; but now the question is what can we do to perfect it in us? It is, above all, necessary to know that we possess the Gift in its substance by sanctifying grace. What we have, therefore, to do is to stir it up within us and make it active. The best means to do this is to cultivate a fervent devotion to the Holy Ghost. Persevering and earnest prayer will help us, and also meditation on the truths of faith, by which we shall obtain a clear idea of their meaning. Finally, a careful cultivation of such virtues as purity of heart and humility will contribute very efficaciously to the perfecting of the Gift within us.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE GIFT OF KNOWLEDGE.

OUR intellect is, in the second place, perfected by the Gift of knowledge. We will consider : (1) in what the Gift consists ; (2) its value to us ; (3) what we can do to perfect it in us.

1. What, then, is the Gift of knowledge? It is a peculiar and supernatural light of the Holy Ghost which shows us the credibility and acceptability of revealed truths, even for reasons which are based only on the order of creation. The Gift of knowledge may, therefore, be defined as an intelligence united to a certainty of judgment in reference to the credibility of revealed truths. This is what distinguishes it from the Gift of understanding. Whereas the latter merely conveys to us the meaning of the truths of faith, the Gift of knowledge goes farther and gives us reasons for their acceptance, and thus strengthens and facilitates our faith in them. Its name agrees with its nature, for in order to perfectly know a thing we must also know its causes and the reasons for it. The Gift of knowledge differs from the virtue of faith by its motive. Faith holds revelation to be true solely because God has affirmed it, but it enters into no other reasons or proofs. But the Gift of knowledge facilitates and strengthens the acceptance of what we believe by showing us the fitness of such acceptance, in that it throws light on the harmony of revealed truth with the order of creation. The peculiarity and distinction of this Gift does not, therefore, rest in its

object—for it may have for its object any revealed truth, even God Himself, the highest of all—but in the motive or reason by which it induces us to hold revealed truth to be true. Its motive is not taken from the higher orders of knowledge, but from what is nearer to man, namely, creation. For example, by this Gift we see that God effected the Incarnation in order to give the universe its crown and completion by this new and wondrous creation; or, again, as regards sin, by the same Gift we see that it is permitted by God in order that man's liberty shall not be interfered with, nor the course of nature violently interrupted. Such motives conducive to faith are drawn from the creation by which man is surrounded, and the light which the Holy Ghost thus throws on revealed truths to strengthen our adhesion to them is a peculiarity of the Gift under consideration.

All revealed truths may be the object of the Gift of knowledge, but it extends its influence also to the sphere of our moral life, as does the Gift of understanding, though the influence of the latter is confined to the speculative side of moral doctrine.¹ This Gift, therefore, reveals to us primarily the natural beauty and excellence of the virtues, and their harmony and fitness with the nobility of human nature. We also learn by it the proper appreciation of the value of life and of temporal possessions. Moreover, it perfects in us our knowledge of self and of our fellows, and gives us facility to lead a life in conformity with

¹ Others ascribe the speculative science of salvation to understanding and wisdom, and its practical science to knowledge and counsel, the sphere of knowledge being what is general and abstract, and that of counsel what is individual and concrete. In one passage (*Summa Theol.*, i., 2, q. 68, a. 4) St. Thomas seems to give to "knowledge" a practical judgment of actions according to the inspiration of the Holy Ghost; but he says, on the other hand, in another passage, that "knowledge" is indeed speculative, but also extends to practice (*Summa Theol.*, ii., 2, q. 8, a. 6; q. 9, a. 3).

reason and the nobler part of our nature. By means of it we penetrate into the counsels of God in His guidance and government of individuals and of nations, and recognise the intention of the divine permissions. It gives us a kind of political-religious intuition, which raises to a higher stand-point our perceptions regarding the philosophy of the history of mankind and of the Church. To this Gift there belongs, moreover, a peculiar insight into the structure, harmony and fitness of creation, and a peculiar knowledge of human nature, so far as such knowledge depends on natural causes, for instance, the mutual relationship of soul and body; and helps us to a right judgment of character and interior dispositions or mental processes by outward appearances. In short, this Gift covers the field of every kind of knowledge of the order of creation that is afforded by a special light of the Holy Ghost, and serves to incline our hearts to supernatural truth.

2. The value and excellence of the Gift of knowledge consist in the advantages it brings both to ourselves and our neighbour. As far as we ourselves are concerned, it leads us ever more deeply into the mysteries of faith, and strengthens our belief in them by the surprising insight it gives us into the harmony of faith with the natural order. By it God is revealed to us as the one Principle of all the orders of creation, and we are shown the different regions of truth as they complete, explain and illuminate each other. By its light we see how the higher order is in a way pre-figured and announced by the lower, and how the lower exists for the higher, and in it finds its development and end; how, in short, all creation forms one great and glorious whole in the divine idea. By this Gift natural science reaches its highest application, and is drawn into the service of God to bear witness to Him.

The salutary effect of the Gift of knowledge on the other virtues is as great as it is on faith. The light which is the mark of it flows from those objects which constitute the domain of hope and of the desire for happiness; but in return it strengthens hope and the moral aspirations of man. As an example of this we can see its importance for self-knowledge and a right appreciation of the good things of this world. Whence proceed mental depression, insensibility of the will to virtue, attachment to the things of this life, vulgarity of mind, the overestimation, nay, the idolatry of worldly science and material comfort? We ignore the natural beauty of virtue, the nobility of our rational and immortal nature, the intention of God in the various orders of creation. We never seem to remember that the only value of the natural order is as a means of attaining what is higher and supernatural! The discovery of the conditional value of life and its possessions, of our heavenly origin, our likeness to God and our destination for supernatural happiness is a great step forward in the field of moral truth and a powerful lever to direct our life into the way of truth. It is the beginning of a conversion from the things of this world and a return to God, and this discovery is essentially an effect of the Gift of knowledge.

We equally obtain an increase in the knowledge and love of God when, by the light of this Gift, we acquire a better understanding of the laws, order and harmony of the visible and invisible worlds, and discover their mutual relation. How would it be possible not to admire and adore God's wisdom, power and goodness which are everywhere manifest, and proclaim Him to be the Centre, Principle and End of all creation? The created universe is like a wondrous book written both inside and outside, from the pages of which we can gather a clear knowledge

of God. As many races as there are of creatures, so many voices are there wherewith to praise God.

As for the advantages of this Gift for our neighbour, it is evident how much it contributes to plant the faith in his heart, and to cultivate and defend it ; because by it faith is clearly shown to him in its relations to man and to the world around him, and revealed truths are explained and, so to speak, brought within his reach. Creation, by its light, becomes, as it were, a proto-gospel of faith and virtue. This Gift, therefore, possesses a peculiar importance for preachers and teachers. By its help they can bring home to the hearts of their hearers the mysteries of faith and make the obligations of morality both easy and pleasant, and urge with power the pursuit of virtue. They are enabled to know what to say to each one, and to judge what is suitable and helpful under every special circumstance. The effect of this Gift, so invaluable to preachers and teachers, is a profound knowledge of mankind, popular eloquence and a certain directness of thought which moves the heart of man.

3. It is not only purity of heart which nourishes and develops this Gift in us, but also prayer and especially devotion to the Holy Ghost and legitimate confidence in Him. St. Vincent Ferrer used to preach with extraordinary fruit. One day he was called to preach before the king, and consequently bestowed more time and pains on the preparation of his sermon. But his words had not the same blessed effect as had those of the next sermon he preached, the preparation of which he left entirely to God. Being interrogated about this inequality in his sermons the saint answered : " It was Vincent who preached yesterday, but to-day it was the Holy Ghost ". We have already considered the close relation of the Holy Ghost to the whole of creation ; and it is by this Gift of knowledge that He hands to man the key of that rich treasure-

chamber of the knowledge and love of God. We find a wonderful proof of the power of the Gift in our Blessed Lord Himself when He taught His doctrine by means of striking and popular parables. On one hand He borrowed His lessons from the visible creation and the events of daily life, but on the other He revealed through them the very depths of the divine mysteries.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE GIFT OF WISDOM.

LASTLY, the intellect is perfected from a speculative point of view by the Gift of wisdom. We will now consider: (1) in what this Gift consists; (2) why its possession is desirable; (3) how we can perfect it in ourselves.

1. The Gift of wisdom is an illumination of the Holy Ghost, thanks to which our intellect is able to look at revealed truths in their more sublime light and to the greater joy of our souls. It agrees with the Gift of knowledge so far that it attracts our minds to the truths of faith by putting them before us as fitting and credible; but it differs from knowledge in this, that it draws its motives for the acceptance of revealed truth from the highest of all sources, even from God Himself, instead of from the created order or from man. Looking at truth in God, it considers its harmony with Him, contemplates how He sees it, and then, in the language of theology, judges it *per rationes divinas*. It follows that an extraordinary light is kindled in our minds by the Gift, by which we see the truth; and by this light there is shed joy and consolation on our will and emotions; for love is born of knowledge. Fulness of light and sensible sweetness, together with a certain affinity to charity, are the distinguishing marks of this Gift.

It may be said that the Gift of understanding proceeds immediately from faith, knowledge from hope and an ordinate desire for beatitude, whereas wisdom

proceeds from charity.¹ To contemplate anything with the reason is quite different from contemplating it with the heart; and, moreover, our judgment is different if it refers to a person whom we love. Such is the method of wisdom. It loves God, therefore it refers everything to Him; and this reference increases the interest, loveliness and acceptability of the object. On the other hand, it increases our love of God and our joy in Him.

Therefore, the exercise of wisdom comprises three acts: that of looking at revealed truth from the highest stand-point; that of rejoicing in its beauty and loveliness; and that of considering it as supremely acceptable. The motive of the acceptance of truth is precisely this light and joy which the Holy Ghost infuses into us, in that He gives us a supernatural certitude about the truths of faith and of the harmony of faith with God. On this account doctors have called the Gift of wisdom "the sweet-tasting knowledge of God". All revealed truths and also truths of a lower order can be the object of the Gift of wisdom, on condition that they be looked at and judged from that sublime and divine point of view. The truths and precepts of the moral life are also its object. When these are referred to God they acquire such an attractive aspect that not only do we accept them at once, but do so with the utmost joy and delight, as the Psalmist says in more than one passage: "I have loved Thy commandments above gold and topaz . . . they are more than honey to my mouth".² Among the effects of the Gift are spiritual illuminations and consolations received in prayer and in the spiritual life—ecstasies not even excepted.

2. It is scarcely necessary to point out the import-

¹ Or, as theology so beautifully expresses it: *ex connaturalitate ad Deum charitative* (*Summa Theol.*, ii., 2, q. 45, a. 2).

² Ps. cxviii. 103, 127.

ance to us of this Gift. It is the greatest and most excellent of all the Gifts, and its effects extend to the whole spiritual life. Nothing is more effectual than wisdom to tear us from sin and wean us from earthly enjoyments and attachments. This efficacy belongs to the peculiarity of its nature, namely, to the power of the sweetness, consolation and joy which always accompany its high knowledge. Thanks to its sweetness, our senses are weaned from the things of this world; the soul turns from earthly things, finds its home in God and rests contented in His service. Thus this Gift is a sure and sweet means of avoiding sin, as says Holy Scripture: "By wisdom they were healed, whosoever have pleased Thee, O Lord, from the beginning"¹; "I preferred her before kingdoms and thrones, and esteemed riches nothing in comparison of her . . . all gold in comparison of her is as a little sand . . . I loved her above health and beauty, and chose to have her instead of light; for her light cannot be put out"². Such are the natural sentiments of all those to whom the Gift of wisdom has been imparted. Hence even to beginners in the spiritual life it is of great importance.

But the Gift is of no less importance to those who are already making progress, and whose endeavour it is to practise the virtues and grow in them. The effect of wisdom in assisting the practice of virtue is extraordinary. In the divine light of this Gift virtue acquires such attractiveness, sweetness and beauty that it captivates the heart, and all difficulties vanish before the joy and consolation which accompany it. Under its influence the burden of precept and virtue is not even felt, as says the Psalmist: "Thy justifications were the subject of my song in the place of my pilgrimage"³. There are no virtues, however hard to nature—such as chastity, poverty, love of enemies, love of

¹ Wisd. ix. 19.

² *Ibid.* vii. 8, 9, 10.

³ Ps. cxviii. 54.

humiliations and of the Cross, etc.—which do not become pleasant by the help of this Gift. We can see an example of this in the martyrs, hermits and apostles, who, in spite of persecutions, privations and dangers, led a life full of the joy of the Holy Ghost. Even the theological virtues are enhanced by the effects of the Gift. No doubt the revealed truths are not made more clear and evident in themselves by it, but their conformity and harmony with the attributes of God are made more plain; moreover, it causes a sweet emotion to be imparted to us by the Holy Ghost, which adds a peculiar security and certitude regarding the credibility of revelation. It is, in truth, a great help to faith. In virtue of the same Gift hope makes her home with charity, and gives to her dominion over all the aspirations, desires and inclinations of the heart. Nothing can give us more control over our passions than holy wisdom. As St. James says, it is, as it were, an epitome of all virtues: "Wisdom that is from above is chaste, peaceable, modest, full of mercy and good fruits".¹

Lastly, the Gift of wisdom is the privilege of the perfect, and gives them even here below a foretaste of the happiness of heaven. Heaven is light and joy: light by the immediate vision of God; joy by the love and possession of the sovereign good. God is all in all to the blessed, who see and love everything in Him. Now the essence of this Gift is that it refers everything to God, looks at everything from His stand-point, and is happy in this knowledge. Thus it beautifies this miserable life and throws over its shadows the glamour of eternal happiness. The Gift causes the joy, in the atmosphere of which the saints live even here below, so that to them nothing is difficult, nothing impossible: "I have run the way

¹ James iii. 17.

of Thy commandments when Thou didst enlarge my heart".¹

The Gift of wisdom is also important in reference to our neighbour, as by it is given that peculiar unction of speech about divine things which has a most powerful effect on others. This so-called unction of speech is essentially an effect of charity. The less acuteness of dry intelligence and dazzling sublimity of ideas there are in a preacher's words, and the more there is in them of the tender qualities of the heart—gentleness, goodness, benevolence and especially love for God and man—the more unction do they contain. The charm of such a manner of speech works irresistibly and wins the hearts of men. The value of this Gift for the salvation of souls is, therefore, evident, because of the manifest dependence on it of this spiritual unction. It is distinguished from all the other Gifts by its affinity to love, of which it offers the consolations, joys and sweetness, by referring everything to God, by which it makes all things both lovely and lovable. The Holy Ghost is essentially the Principle of unction, because He is Love and, therefore, the Unction of the Godhead. St. Augustine, St. Bernard, St. Francis of Sales and St. Bonaventure are marked for their possession of the Gift of wisdom; whereas St. Thomas, St. Jerome and St. Chrysostom are more remarkable for their possession of the Gifts of knowledge and understanding.

3. The precious advantages and effects of this Gift prove its value to us, and should make us do all we can to receive it in fuller measure. And how can we do this? The first thing is to have a strong desire for the Gift and a greater appreciation of it. Scripture indicates such a desire as one of the means of obtaining wisdom: "Wherefore I wished, and understanding was given to me."² Wisdom have I loved and have

¹ Ps. cxviii. 32.

² Wisd. vii. 7.

sought her out from my youth, and I have desired to take her for my spouse, and I became a lover of her beauty.¹ She is easily seen by them that love her, and is found by them that seek her . . . she preventeth them that covet her, and he that waketh early to seek her . . . shall find her sitting at his door.”²

From desire comes prayer, which is a second means of gaining wisdom. God the Holy Ghost can alone give it to us. For “where is wisdom to be found? The deep saith: It is not in me; and the sea saith: It is not within me. . . . Whence then cometh wisdom? It is hid from the eyes of all living. . . . God understandeth the way of it, and He knoweth the place thereof”;³ “If any of you want wisdom, let him ask of God who giveth to all men abundantly”.⁴ The wise man prays thus to God: “Give me wisdom that sitteth by Thy throne . . . send her out of Thy holy heaven that she may be with me, and may labour with me, that I may know what is acceptable with Thee”.⁵

Holy purity and humility of heart will greatly help us to obtain wisdom in fuller measure. Nothing is more opposed to this Gift than sensuality, self-confidence and self-conceit. He who wishes to possess wisdom as his spouse must abstain as far as he can from earthly pleasures, and must depend on God with childlike confidence and humility: “Neither is wisdom found in the land of them that live in delights”;⁶ “The sensual man perceiveth not the things that are of the Spirit of God”.⁷ And again: “Wisdom will not enter into a malicious soul, nor dwell in a body subject to sins”.⁸ She seeks out pure and humble souls: “Whosoever is a little one, let him come to me; and to the unwise she said: Come, eat my bread”.⁹

¹ Wisd. viii. 2.

² *Ibid.* vi. 13, 14, 15.

³ Job xxviii. 12 *sqq.*

⁴ James i. 5.

⁵ Wisd. ix. 4, 10.

⁶ Job xxviii. 13.

⁷ 1 Cor. ii. 14.

⁸ Wisd. i. 4.

⁹ Prov. ix. 4, 5.

Any trouble we take will be amply repaid by the glorious effects and fruits of the Gift of wisdom, with which nothing can be compared. Wisdom is, indisputably, the greatest and most sublime of all the Gifts. By no other Gift does the Holy Ghost reveal so clearly His nature and attributes. He sounds the depths of the Godhead and is the Person of joy. Therefore, by means of this Gift He fills our souls with a glorious light and our hearts with rare consolation. Hence the praise given to wisdom by Scripture: "Now all good things come to me together with her and innumerable riches through her hands. . . . For she is an infinite treasure to men, which they that use become the friends of God, being commended for the gift of discipline. . . . She is a vapour of the power of God, she is the brightness of eternal light and the unspotted mirror of God's majesty, and the image of His goodness." ¹

¹ Wisd. vii. 11'sqq.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE GIFT OF COUNSEL.

THE Gift of counsel is also one of those which perfect the intellect. We will, therefore, consider: (1) in what the Gift consists; (2) what advantages it confers on us; (3) how we can cultivate it.

1. The Gift of counsel is a light given by the Holy Ghost by means of which our practical intellect sees and rightly judges both what should be done in individual cases, and what are the best means to do it. It differs from the three Gifts which have been already considered in this, that they have to do with speculative knowledge, or, if they influence what is practical, do so in a more general way; but counsel concerns itself solely with what is practical, and shows our intellect how we must act in accordance with the will of God in individual cases and under certain circumstances. In many respects the Gift of counsel is analogous to the cardinal virtue of prudence. Their object is the same. Prudence applies the general principles of morality to individual cases, first, considering, then judging and, finally, deciding on the best means to be employed; and so it is with the Gift of counsel. It applies to individual cases the speculative-practical knowledge gained by the light of reason, by faith and the other Gifts of the intellect. It considers, judges and ordains the means to be employed, and, like prudence, is essentially a judgment of practical reason.

It is, on the other hand, quite different from pru-

dence: first, whereas with the virtue the determining principle is reason, both natural and supernatural, with the Gift the principle is a peculiar assurance and fixed conviction that it is the Holy Ghost who is directing us and showing us what to do. Our motive for obeying this direction is at once reverence for the Holy Ghost and a readiness to follow His inspirations; and, in this sense, it can be said that the Gift of counsel makes us peculiarly docile to His guidance. A second difference between the two is this, that in many cases the decision arrived at by the Gift of counsel is far more sublime than that of a natural, or even simply supernatural, method of judgment, so much so that at first sight it might seem to be materially opposed to ordinary prudence, and even repugnant to the principles of morality, unless some higher power prevented any offence against them by a special divine light and inspiration. We find instances of this both in Scripture and in the lives of the saints. Such, for instance, were the judgment of Solomon,¹ the exploits of Samson² and Eleazar,³ which were, in both cases, the cause of death, the judgment of Daniel,⁴ Jephthe's vow,⁵ the martyrdoms of St. Apollonia and St. Pelagia, and many examples of blind obedience miraculously approved by God. It must, however, be always borne in mind that when, in cases such as these, men and women act contrary to the ordinary rules of morality, it must be made quite plain to them that the monition of the Holy Ghost is real, and that the inspiration which they are obeying is not at variance with the primary moral laws. The object of the inspiration must be, at least, indifferent, and never such as to be bad under any circumstances. Only under these conditions are we allowed or obliged to obey the inspiration. An act thus accomplished under the im-

¹ 3 Kings iii. 25.

² Jud. xvi. 29.

³ 1 Macc. vi. 46.

⁴ Dan. xiii. 51.

⁵ Jud. xi. 30.

pulse of the Gift of counsel is not disobedience, but a higher obedience to God who, for reasons known to His wisdom, reveals His will, not by the ordinary way of law, but by an extraordinary monition which demands obedience in the particular case. But—let us repeat—no doubt must exist as to the reality of the inspiration.

It can be seen from this that the Gift of counsel helps and perfects the virtue of prudence in the same way that the Gifts already considered raise and perfect the theological virtues of faith, hope, and even charity. In this Gift we find, moreover, different degrees of practical light. It can be communicated to us either for ourselves or for others, either for the ordinary circumstances of our calling in life or for quite extraordinary occasions. He who has received from the Holy Ghost sufficient light for the ordinary circumstances of his vocation possesses the Gift of counsel.

2. See the advantages which are conferred on us by this Gift! As for ourselves, it has the inestimable advantage of keeping us continually in the ways of Providence and of the will of God. That all our decisions and actions should be in accordance with the divine will is the one essential and the first condition of salvation and perfection. And what an advantage is this for a soul which loves God and desires to do His will in all things! Another advantage conferred by the Gift is that it prevents us from being deceived and falling into error. This is a most precious privilege! Think how easy it is to make a false step, I will not say under the impulse of passion, but by want of light, clearness or circumspection. It is not enough to know that a thing which we desire or choose is good in itself, but it is necessary for perfect action to know whether it be good or the best under such and such circumstances. The "better" as well

as the "bad" can be an enemy of the "good". Without the light of the Gift of counsel we might be constantly making false steps, or, in any case, we might act in a natural and human spirit. But, as says Scripture, "counsel shall keep thee, and prudence shall preserve thee".¹ Lastly, this Gift brings great tranquillity to the soul, because it keeps it in a perpetual state of dependence on God, and enables us to meet all the events of life with confidence and without harm, trusting, like children, to His guidance. God will lead us and guide us. If we have an experienced and expert guide with us when we are travelling it gives us a feeling of great security and repose: "The Lord ruleth me and I shall want nothing".²

It is, moreover, evident how much we can do by the help of this Gift for the spiritual good and salvation of our neighbour. We can apply to him all the advantages that it brings to ourselves. It is of special importance for superiors of religious houses and directors of souls, whose duty it is to lead those committed to their charge in the ways of the Lord. Without this Gift a merely natural and human spirit might influence their guidance of souls, and, instead of leading them in the ways of God, they might lead them along the paths of human wisdom. The virtues as well as the faults of those under direction require the light of this Gift. A superior must, as much as he can, prevent faults by the use of a wise foresight, or else he must correct them by a fitting chastisement; but if he wish to avoid mistakes he must call in the assistance of the Gift of counsel. Again, in the case of the decrees and admonitions of ecclesiastical superiors, doubts how far it is prudent to apply them might arise in individual cases, or uncertainty as to the exact sense in which they are to be taken, whether literally or with some

¹ Prov. ii. 11.

² Ps. xxii. 1.

latitude. In cases such as these the Gift of counsel will always direct us to take a right course.

Counsel characterised our Lord's words when the malice of His enemies prepared snares for Him. Could anything be more admirable than His answer and verdict about the tribute money,¹ or about the woman taken in adultery,² and on many other occasions? How marvellous was His conduct when brought before Herod!³ In this last instance we find a peculiar illustration of that superior light which judges and decides in direct opposition to the dictates of natural prudence. St. Antony the Hermit is said to have been so remarkable for this Gift that the name of "the counsellor" was given to him.

3. The means by which we can cultivate within us the Gift of counsel are: first, by obeying its inspirations with fidelity and promptitude as soon as we recognise them. If we are docile and submissive in those things which we know, the Holy Ghost will lead us farther on, and act towards us as does a wise teacher towards his scholars, to whom he never introduces a new lesson until the old has been learned. Souls which aspire to perfection must take this to heart. A spiritual writer says: "The faults of the perfect consist in this, that they do not follow the guidance of the Holy Ghost, or, at best, only partially". Secondly, we must pray with zeal to the Holy Ghost, and ask Him to quicken and perfect His Gift in us. Never allow a day to pass without commending yourselves to Him, and imploring Him to shed His light on you whenever you have a decision to make. Thirdly, we must accustom ourselves to act on every occasion according to the dictates of reason and conscience. This is a good disposition of mind, and will prepare us for the grace of a special guidance of the Holy Ghost. Such care will produce in us a straight-

¹ Matt. xxii. 19.

² John viii. 3.

³ Luke xxiii. 9.

ness and loyalty of heart which are very pleasing to Him, and without which He will not communicate Himself to us in any special manner.

Besides this we must be on our guard against those faults which are opposed to the special guidance of the Holy Ghost. The first of these faults is the so-called prudence of the flesh, which is quite opposed to the Holy Ghost, having what is temporal and carnal as its end, and being very lax in the choice of its methods. Another fault is self-confidence and trust in the justice and infallibility of our judgment and perspicacity. However great may be our natural penetration of mind, and however complete our detachment from inordinate passions, these will not give us the light of the Holy Ghost, but only the natural light of reason, which, just because it is natural, does not possess the clearness and penetration, and far less the power of the divine light, and is, in many cases, powerless to show us God's intentions in our regard. A third fault is unrest, excitement, dissipation and precipitation in business and decisions. This fault is always more or less accompanied by disquietude, impatience, self-love and self-confidence, all of which conditions keep us from listening to the Holy Ghost. Consideration, foresight, circumspection, attention to our own experience and that of others are the necessary accompaniment of the virtue of prudence and also of the Gift of counsel. Finally, we must guard against inconstancy, negligence and procrastination. Even as frivolity and precipitancy actually prevent the action of the Gift of counsel, so do the last-mentioned faults render it useless and fruitless, by making us miss the opportunity of following its dictates.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE GIFT OF FORTITUDE.

THE three remaining Gifts relate to the will, and perfect it in the exercise of right and duty. The first Gift of the will is fortitude, and we will now consider : (1) in what the Gift consists ; (2) its value to us ; (3) how we can cultivate it in us.

1. The Gift of fortitude is a permanent power which the Holy Ghost communicates to our will to assist us in overcoming the difficulties which might deter us in the practice of what is right. The will, and especially the irascible part of the will, is the faculty which this Gift perfects. All the obstacles which beset us in the practice of virtue and which could weaken or maim our will are its object. So far, the Gift of fortitude is entirely analogous to the cardinal virtue of the same name ; and, in fact, it is that virtue which is raised and perfected by the Gift.

Nevertheless, according to the opinion of great theologians, there is an essential difference between the two, in the same way that there is a difference between the Gift of counsel and the virtue of prudence. Their motive is different. In the virtue the fitness, convenience and excellence of the deed itself is the motive, whereas that of the Gift is the interior and firm conviction that the Holy Ghost is with us and is strengthening us. From this there follows another difference. By the Gift the "golden mean" is judged by a totally different standard. What, looked at by the light of the virtue, might appear to be exaggeration,

presumption and rashness, is right if looked at by the light of the Gift, because it is done by the will of the Holy Ghost and by His power. In the latter case man is by the Gift raised to a higher order, and is made capable of a higher action. This constitutes a sufficient distinction between the Gift and the virtue.

In order to understand better the domain of this Gift we must define its object more precisely. It may be said in a word to consist in every hindrance which could have a deterrent or wearying effect on the will, and keep it from doing what is right. Among such hindrances may be enumerated difficult or dangerous labours and undertakings, persistent temptations, aridity and desolation, weariness in prayer and good works, dull and trying duties, sojourn in an unhealthy climate, calumny, persecution, threats of injury and death, and, in short, every possible obstacle which we could have to confront and overcome, and every suffering which we could have to endure. The Gift of fortitude steels and strengthens us against all these difficulties, so that there is nothing which we cannot by its help overcome. Moreover, the effects of this strength are not confined to the soul, but at times endow even our bodies with a wonderful tenacity and power of resistance. We can see examples of this in the fathers of the desert and their heroic penances, in missionaries with their superhuman exploits and labours undertaken by them for the salvation of souls, and in the martyrs whose bodies were proof against the ingenious devices of an unparalleled cruelty. As we have already seen, Samson and other saints of the Old Testament were gifted with superhuman powers for the performance of actions for which they were chosen by God. Ordinary grace and ordinary virtue would not have sufficed in cases such as theirs, and their vocation called for a different kind of strength. This is given by the Gift of fortitude.

2. Let us now consider why this Gift is to be so much desired by us. First, because of its necessity both for our spiritual life and for our ordinary life, on account of the numerous obstacles and troubles with which they are beset. Indeed, perseverance in the spiritual life would be inconceivable without the Gift of fortitude. How—to mention some absolutely unavoidable features of the spiritual life—how would prayer and self-conquest be possible without an abundant measure of courage and endurance? Who would be able without this Gift to overcome all interior difficulties and temptations, such as weariness, disgust, desolation and despondency in the practice of virtue and penance? We might find ourselves in a difficult position involving important and repugnant duties, or in one which would compel us to put up with the faults of others, or combat their evil doings at the expense of our own peace of mind or the sacrifice of our own interests. Or, again, we might be overtaken by misfortunes so serious and menacing as to force us to choose between sacrificing our worldly prosperity and remaining faithful to God. Remember the days of persecution, and those times of pestilence which have cost the lives of thousands of priests and pastors. Lastly, there is not one amongst us who will not be called on to suffer pain, sickness and death. Who can fail to see that the service of God is surrounded by trials and difficulties over which supernatural courage can alone triumph? This was in the Apostle's mind when he impressed on us so urgently the need of patience and steadfastness. "Patience is necessary for you,"¹ says he; and the same thing may be said about the Gift of fortitude.

Fortitude is as excellent as it is necessary. By it alone can we shake off the yoke of timidity and faint-heartedness to which we are born. By it we become

¹ Heb. x. 36.

beings of a higher order, and obtain possession of the key of all virtues and perfection. Virtue is beautiful and lovable in itself, and there is every reason why we should wish to practise it, were it not for the difficulties in the way which frighten us. If only there existed some assistance by which the obstacles could be surmounted, it would be the very condition and means of virtue. Now this is precisely what the Gift of fortitude does for us, its essence being the dominion which it gives us over all difficulties. With its help we can surmount all the obstacles and labours which the practice of virtue entails. But even apart from this the spirit of fortitude is, in itself, a disposition conducive to a life of virtue. Fortitude subdues levity, rashness and imprudence of character, quickness of temper and the emotions of passion; it makes us calm, solid and circumspect, and gives us steadfastness and perseverance: in short, there is nothing that is most excellent in virtue which it does not enable us to accomplish. It is the atmosphere in which all true virtue grows and flourishes.

Finally, fortitude enables us to undertake and carry out really great things. There can be no great vocations without this Gift; but with it there is nothing that cannot be overcome. It teaches us the most important lesson of life, namely, how to endure and suffer, which is a far more important and difficult thing as well as one more noble and perfect. In action we are the stronger because it is we who attack; in suffering we are the weaker because it is we who are attacked and who have yet to sustain the fight. He who attacks sees the danger only in the future, but he who suffers sees it in the present and touching him. Moreover, suffering lasts very often much longer than the most heroic action.¹ When we fight we take the active part, and when we endure

¹ *Summa Theol.*, ii., 2, q. 123, a. 6, ad 1.

we take the suffering part, and the battle has often to be fought at the cost of our dearest interests, our favourite inclinations, our honour, our health and our life. To suffer and to suffer well is certainly the hardest and, therefore, the most glorious task which can be imposed on us. We can see this in the life of our Blessed Lord which was one of continual progress. First, He worked, then He preached and, finally, He suffered and died to redeem us by His suffering and death, as He alone could do. In no part of His life did He reveal the riches of His virtue, and especially that of fortitude, so gloriously as in His Sacred Passion, which, having foreseen, He accepted with the utmost determination.

This is the reason of our great veneration for the martyrs. They saw the whole world in league against them, yet they despised and overcame it. Thus they did not obtain the kingdom of heaven only by the sacrifice of their possessions, but stormed it sword in hand and won it with their hearts' blood. This is the highest kind of combat, and martyrdom is, therefore, regarded as the supreme act of love and fortitude. As our Lord says: "Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends".¹ The holy martyrs have helped more than any to the propagation of the Church, and this is but just. The example of their glorious courage could not fail to have a strengthening and stimulating effect on the faithful, and inspire their enemies with terror. Such an act is often in itself of more value than a whole ordinary life; therefore let us never lose the opportunity, if it is presented to us, of giving our lives for Christ. Such opportunities may be found in the service of those sick of contagious diseases, in preaching the faith at the cost of extraordinary labour and hostility, or in the performance of the office of a pastor

¹ John xv. 13; *cf.* Heb. xi. 32 *sq.*

of souls when we have to give up our lives for our flock.

3. Let us examine briefly how we can best cultivate the Gift of fortitude in us. First, we must destroy all self-love, *i.e.*, all sensuality and vanity, because these are usually the principle of pusillanimity. Of what shall he be afraid who cares nothing for either comfort or honour? To die to ourselves is, therefore, the best preparation for intrepidity.

Secondly, we must be on our guard against a purely human prudence. This quality is most timid and vacillating both in making and keeping resolutions, because it is in terror of suffering temporal loss, and considers neither the supernatural nor heaven where all temporal losses suffered for God are repaid a hundredfold. Let us, therefore, be always guided by the Gift of counsel.

Thirdly, we must have a great confidence in God. If we trust merely to ourselves, naturally our resolution will soon fail. Let us trust in God, and then shall we be able to do all things.¹ "Greater is He that is in us than He that is in the world."²

Fourthly, we must be devout to the Holy Ghost, and pray Him to arm us with the Gift of fortitude, so that we may be able under all circumstances to do our duty and fulfil the will of God. Our Lord, when He promised the Holy Ghost to the Apostles, called Him the power from above.³ Remember how this power manifested itself in them! How timid and faint-hearted they were before the coming of the Holy Ghost, and how determined, intrepid and regardless of death after they were filled with his power! They joyfully sealed their apostolate with their blood, which they shed for our Lord. "They rejoiced," says the Book of the Acts, "that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the Name of Jesus."⁴ How

¹ Phil. iv. 13.

² 1 John iv. 4.

³ Acts i. 8.

⁴ Acts v. 41.

gloriously the Holy Ghost triumphed in the holy martyrs! "Behold tortures, torments, fire, swords and wild beasts," says St. Cyril of Jerusalem. "But the Holy Ghost says: 'Persevere in the name of the Lord . . . all this is but little and lasts for but a short time . . . there (in heaven) everything is great and eternal'." The saint goes on to describe the joys of heaven and show to the martyr the glories of paradise, and then proceeds: "The martyr stands in the body before his judge, but his spirit, power and strength are in heaven. . . . 'When they shall bring you before magistrates, be not solicitous how or what you shall answer, for the Holy Ghost shall teach you' (Luke xii. 11). It is impossible for the martyr to suffer except by the Holy Ghost."¹ We find the same idea in some pictures of martyrdoms which represent the Holy Ghost giving a crown to the martyrs.

¹ St. Cyril, *Catech.*, xvi., c. 20, 21.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE GIFT OF HOLY FEAR.

THE Gift of holy fear is another of those which perfect the will. Let us, therefore, consider : (1) its nature ; (2) its value to us.

1. What are we to understand by the Gift of holy fear? Theologians hold different opinions about this, and it will, therefore, be necessary for us to go rather more closely into the subject. Speaking generally, fear is an emotion which seizes hold of us at the prospect of an evil which threatens us and could deter us from attaining to happiness. Several kinds of fear are to be distinguished. First, there is natural fear, which, by reason of our natural disposition, makes us turn from any evil which threatens us. This fear is in itself quite indifferent, and becomes bad only when it induces us to transgress the commandments of God. Supernatural fear has for its object an evil made known to us by faith, or, in other words, sin or its punishment. However, not every fear of this sort is supernatural. Even in the fear of hell two kinds can be distinguished. In the first place, there is the slavishly servile fear which is not sufficient for salvation, whether because it does not detach the will from its affection for sin, or because it is not supernatural and does not contain even a spark or beginning of the love of God. But simply servile fear does turn the will from actual sin, even though it has for its motive the dread of the justice and chastisements of God. This kind of fear is far from being the most excellent or

perfect, still, according to the declaration of the Council of Trent,¹ it is, if it be supernatural, both good and salutary, because it detests sin as an offence against God, and, therefore, supposes at least a germ of love. But filial fear is the most perfect, because it avoids sin solely as an offence against God, and would do so even were no punishment at stake. In its essence it is an act of perfect charity.

The question is, Which of these kinds of fear is the object of the Gift? It cannot be natural fear, for this is something quite indifferent and natural, whereas the Gifts are purely supernatural faculties. Neither can it be slavishly servile fear, because such fear is bad, vile and insufficient for salvation. There remain, therefore, only simple servile fear and filial fear. Some doctors of the Church, as, for instance, St. Thomas, make both these kinds of fear the object of the Gift.² To this it might be objected that the first kind is too incomplete, and that it is certain that it did not exist in our Lord and will not exist in heaven; and that the second kind, filial fear, is too perfect, because it constitutes a real act of charity, or, at least, has the closest affinity to it. Other doctors consider the object of the Gift to be the fear of God so far as—in the broader sense of the word—it signifies justice, holiness and the perfect fulfilment of the law. In this sense Scripture speaks of the saints as just and God-fearing—as, for instance, Job,³ Simeon⁴ and St. Joseph.⁵ But fear taken in this sense has too wide a signification to be the object of a Gift. Other doctors, again, consider the fear which is the object of the Gift to be simply justice, in so far as it subdues the desire for sinful enjoyments and holds them in check in accordance with the words of Scripture: “Pierce Thou my flesh with Thy fear, for I am afraid of Thy judgments”;⁶

¹ Sess. vi., can. 8. ² *Summa Theol.*, ii., 2, q. 19, a. 8, 9.

³ Job i. 1.

⁴ Luke ii. 25.

⁵ Matt. i. 19.

⁶ Ps. cxviii. 120.

“By the fear of the Lord men depart from evil”;¹ but, again, this opinion presents the same difficulties as the preceding.

The opinion of other great doctors is that the fear of which we are speaking means simply that reverence for God which comes, partly from our realisation of our insignificance and nothingness, and partly from a lively realisation of the greatness of God. Among others, Alexander of Hales holds this opinion and says that the fear which we are considering does not consist merely in the horror and avoidance of an evil, but in a certain awe which holds us back from God on account of our reverence for His Majesty.² St. Augustine also says: “Fear is to be found in the humble, of whom it is said: Blessed are the poor who are not puffed up with pride, as says the Apostle: ‘Be not high-minded but fear’”.³ This fear is, therefore, an act which is analogous to that of humility, by which the Gift supports and perfects the cardinal virtue of temperance. By it we become docile and easily moved towards the virtues involved in temperance, to the practice of which the Holy Ghost incites us, such as moderation in eating and drinking, chastity, modesty.

Thus the Gift is distinguished from all other kinds of salutary fear and from all other virtues, and is to be actually found in our Lord and in the saints. Scripture says that even “the pillars of heaven tremble and dread at the beck of God”.⁴ “These pillars of heaven,” explains St. Gregory, “are the powers of the heavenly hierarchy . . . they tremble at the vision of God, not from anxiety, but from admiration.”⁵ “Fear,” says St. Thomas, “is caused by the insignifi-

¹ Prov. xvi. 6; Eccclus. xxxiv. 14 sq.

² P. ii., q. 156, membr. 2, a. 1.

³ *De serm. Domini in monte*, lib. 1, c. 4.

⁴ Job. xxvi. 11.

⁵ *Moral.*, lib. 17, c. 44.

cance of the creature, and by the infinite distance at which it stands from God; and such a fear will exist in heaven. . . . For even as it is an evil for a rational creature to give its love to an inferior creature, so also is it an evil for a rational creature to approach God without due reverence and with contempt.”¹ In any case the Gift of holy fear cannot be distinguished from that reverence for the Divine Majesty which is the result of a lively realisation of His infinite excellence and glory, and of our own insignificance and nothingness. It manifests itself, therefore, chiefly in the acts of immediate communion with God by prayer and divine worship. Irreverence and a want of recollection would be the contrary of this Gift, as also self-conceit and a want of realisation of our own littleness and poverty.

2. Some reflections will be necessary to throw light on the utility and necessity of this Gift. It is true—and in this Scripture and the fathers agree—that the Gift of holy fear is not as excellent as the other Gifts, and is, therefore, placed last by the prophet.² But that does not take from its importance and necessity. It is, as it were, the foundation of the other Gifts. Of what avail are the beauty and decoration of a building unless it rest on a sure foundation? In this case the foundation is the fear of God. On this account Scripture repeatedly describes the fear of God as the beginning of wisdom;³ which is not to be understood as meaning that the fear of God is the source of wisdom, but that it is that wherewith wisdom begins.⁴ Wisdom, it is true, orders our life according to the mind of God; but the first thing which God requires and must require is that reverence be paid Him and obedience shown Him;

¹ *Summa Theol.*, ii. 2, q. 19, a. 11, et ad 3.

² Isa. xi. 3.

³ Ps. cx. 10; Prov. i. 7; ix. 10; Ecclus. i. 16, 25.

⁴ *Summa Theol.*, ii., 2, q. 19, a. 7.

and from these comes love.¹ In the same way reverence is the first duty we owe our parents. This reverence for God is the effect of the Gift of holy fear, and it is not easy to conceive how the other Gifts could be in us and bear fruit if this Gift had not already taken possession of us. How could wisdom, fortitude or piety exist in our souls if reverence towards God were wanting? Even as reverence for God is the beginning of wisdom, so is irreverence the beginning of folly, inconstancy, forgetfulness of God and sin! Thus the fear of God is actually the foundation of all other Gifts, even as humility is the foundation of all the virtues—in which lie its necessity and importance. The foundation may not be the most beautiful and ornamental part of a building, but it is the firmest and most lasting, and, therefore, the most necessary part.

Let us now consider the importance of the Gift of fear in some of its effects. First, whatever view we may take of its object there is no doubt that it drives sin from the heart. If we take servile fear, we find that this precisely is the first and most ordinary motive by which men are deterred from sin. If we take reverence for the Divine Majesty, it is evident how much this must contribute to keep our souls from sin. If we are filled with such reverence for the Divine Majesty that we scarcely dare to breathe in His presence, it is inconceivable that we should be induced to sin before Him. More than this, reverence dominates us so completely that we dare not treat anything concerning God either superficially or negligently. Scripture says: "He that feareth God neglecteth nothing".² We have already seen how the holy fear of God combines with it a kind of humility, and humility is the beginning of conversion, even as pride is, as a rule, the beginning

¹ Ecclus. xxv. 16.

² Eccles. vii. 19.

of a fall. At all events the Gift preserves us from a multitude of faults in our intercourse with God, and obstructs a large number of sins at their source. Finally, nothing helps us better to guard against tepidity in the spiritual life than a reverent attitude in the presence of God. The recollection of it falls like a kindling spark on our sloth and idleness, wakens us up, and keeps us in a state of zeal. All these are undoubtedly great advantages to the spiritual life, and are fruits of the Gift of fear.

Moreover, the Gift does not only deter us from evil, but prepares in our heart the way for all virtues. Fear, as we have seen, includes humility, and humility is the best preparation for special grace and virtues: "God resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble".¹ Our pride is the chief reason why God withholds and must withhold certain gifts and graces from us; for without humility not only would they not conduce to His glory, but would be hurtful to us, and we should run the risk of being lifted up by them and of thus offending God. Humility puts away the obstacles which keep away the favours of God. Further, he who is humble prays willingly and often, because he knows his own insufficiency, and that he can find help and strength in God alone. Prayer gives the key to all the gifts and graces of God; and by it are fulfilled the words of Scripture: "There is no want to them that fear the Lord".² All virtues flow into the heart in the train of holy fear—nay more, holy fear contains in itself many and most important virtues and makes them easy and pleasant. Such as these are fervour, moderation, mortification, patience, self-hatred and love of the Cross. As a thread is drawn through a piece of cloth by the needle, so does holy fear draw with it and without effort all other virtues into our hearts.

¹ James iv. 6; 1 Peter v. 5; Eccclus. iii. 30.

² Ps. xxxiii. 10.

Besides this treasury of virtues holy fear brings with it the blessings of peace, security, joy and consolation—as says Holy Scripture: “The fear of the Lord is honour and glory and gladness and a crown of joy”.¹ St. Bernard says: “God first begins to be delightful to us when He fills us with fear . . . fear is a sweet savour”.² In fact joy begins with the consciousness that we render to God what we owe Him, and that we are standing before Him in a fitting attitude. The very thought that we are doing so fills us with joy. Moreover, in return for our recognition and honour of His Majesty and justice God allows us to taste of His sweetness, and inclines to us to draw us to Himself. It is with the soul as it was with Queen Esther. After she had paid homage to the king by her fear she was allowed to kiss the top of the sceptre.³

The great importance of this Gift for the time of prayer, when we are conversing personally with God, is evident. It is of still greater importance for those whose vocation, like that of priests and religious, requires frequent prayer. The closer the relation into which they enter with God so much the more necessary is the possession and perfect exercise of this Gift. Without its assistance they run the risk of committing many faults and of not treating God with sufficient reverence. Reverence is the first thing that we owe to the presence of God; “for,” as we read in Scripture, “if I be a Master, where is My fear, saith the Lord of hosts”.⁴ This Gift has a special importance for our generation and our age. A defect in our faith inclines us to treat God as though He were our equal; and we often show in our external behaviour more respect to the world than we do to God. The saints did not think and act in this manner. They were singular in their extraordinary reverence in the pre-

¹Ecclus. i. 11.

³Esth. v. 2.

²*In Cant.*, serm. 23, c. 14.

⁴Mal. i. 6.

sence of God. Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque was so filled with the sense of it that she could scarcely bring herself to keep off her knees when doing her most ordinary work. St. Paul tells us with what reverence our Blessed Lord treated His Eternal Father, when speaking of Him as one, "who in the days of His flesh, with a strong cry and tears, offering up prayer and supplications, was heard for His reverence".¹

We must, therefore, cultivate this Gift most carefully, and often ask the Holy Ghost to perfect and finish it in us. It would be salutary on our part to ponder frequently on our unworthiness and misery, in order to learn to know better the greatness and glory of God. A very good means to this end is to collect our thoughts before each prayer we make, and to consider who it is with whom we are about to converse; and while we are at prayer we should be careful to observe great exterior modesty. In this way reverence will penetrate to our innermost soul.

¹ Heb. v. 7.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE GIFT OF PIETY.

ONE of the most excellent of the Gifts is piety. We must try to obtain: (1) an idea of the nature of this Gift; (2) of its glorious effects.

1. What are we to understand by the Gift of piety? Before proceeding farther it may be well to observe that the word piety, in the ordinary acceptation of the term, is not very expressive of the nature of the Gift; for in the strict sense of the word piety means an inclination and readiness to honour God by prayer and worship, and is in this sense nothing more nor less than the virtue of religion. But that is by no means everything belonging to the Gift under consideration. The Latin word *donum pietatis* is more comprehensive. Properly speaking we are to understand by *piety*, taken as a translation of the Latin *pietas*, the filial love we owe to parents. Now, as God is our Father we owe Him also this piety; and it is in this sense that we must take the word. The Gift of piety, therefore, signifies an inclination and readiness to honour God as our Father. It differs from the virtue of religion: first, because it honours God especially as a Father, whereas religion regards Him more in the light of a Lord and Creator; secondly, there is a difference in their object. Even as the virtue of piety extends not only to parents, but to God, in so far as He is our Father, and then, further, to our brothers and sisters, relatives, fellow-countrymen, and even to our country, the love of which is

most closely connected with filial love ;¹ so the object of the Gift extends from God to everything which in any way relates to Him. Thus, in the wider sense of the word, we can include in the object of the Gift every act of justice towards God and our neighbour, in so far as it is founded on the filial love of God.² Therefore the Gift of piety inclines us to practise all the duties of justice, and fulfil all the obligations of the cardinal virtue of that name.

The following effects of the Gift of piety show its influence in greater detail. First, the inclination to regard God as our Father, to converse with Him in a filial manner, to cultivate intercourse with Him by prayer, to observe His commandments with childlike reverence, and to accept in a childlike manner whatever He ordains for us. Secondly, a love and veneration of the saints, in so far as we regard them as glorified brethren. Thirdly, a filial love and veneration for our Holy Church, because she is God's representative and our spiritual mother. Fourthly, reverence for all objects of worship and religion. Lastly, the fulfilment of all our duties towards our fellow-men, because they are children of God and our brethren in Jesus Christ. There also belongs to this Gift a certain gentleness, kindness, compassion, benevolence, calm and unction which proceed from charity.

The opposite of the Gift of piety is a want of filial confidence in God, which is marked by distaste for prayer, neglect of it, repugnance for what God ordains for us, and a spirit of irreverence and frivolity in everything connected with religion, the Church and Scripture, which makes us treat and speak carelessly of them. The absence of the Gift shows itself, moreover, in austerity and bitterness towards others, in hardness

¹ *Summa Theol.*, i., 2, q. 68, a. 4, ad 2 ; ii., 2, q. 101, a. 1 ; q. 121, a. 1.

² *Ibid.*, ii., 2, q. 221, a. 1, ad 3.

of heart which renders us insensible to the sufferings of our neighbour, and censorious of his failings, while it fills us with susceptibility about our own concerns. This is a state of mind which St. Paul describes in the following passage: "Men shall be lovers of themselves, proud, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, without affection, without peace, unmerciful, without kindness".¹

2. Let us now consider some of the reasons which ought to make us value and desire the Gift of piety. First, there is scarcely anything which corresponds better with the spirit of Christianity. Thanks to our Divine Saviour, and our elevation to a supernatural state, we are, as we have seen, really the children of God, and belong to the one great spiritual family of all those who have received the same adoption. Now what could correspond better with this condition than a spirit of filial love for God and a fraternal love for others? This filial spirit is the most distinctive mark of Christianity. God Himself requires this disposition on our part. Even under the Old Covenant, which was a dispensation of fear and servitude, God desired to be regarded and honoured as a Father. He speaks thus through the prophet: "Therefore, at the least from this time, call to Me: Thou art my Father".² How much more must this be the case under the New Covenant! Our Lord constantly speaks of God as our Father in heaven, and in the "Our Father" bids us address Him by that name when we pray to Him. St. Paul describes this filial spirit as the epitome of the Gospel and new order of grace: "For you have not received the spirit of bondage again in fear," says he, "but you have received the spirit of adoption of souls, whereby we cry: Abba, Father".³ This spirit characterises all the saints, or, rather, it is what makes them saints. If God desires to be and really is not only our

¹ 2 Tim. iii. 2.

² Jer. iii. 4.

³ Rom. viii. 15.

Lord and Creator, but also our Father, it is but fitting that we should consider ourselves as His children, and treat Him as our Father.

But there is one thing which makes this Gift especially precious to us, namely, its influence on our spiritual life. In the first place, by the filial spirit we are able to give the greatest honour to God and serve Him in a way worthy of His Divine Majesty. Without this Gift our hearts would contain unfilial thoughts about God—thoughts of distrust, diffidence and suspicion, which might at last breed doubts as to whether He were really good to us, and might make us ask ourselves whether He were not, all throughout, seeking His own interests; and to this there might follow anxious speculations as to our own future state. It would, indeed, be most fortunate if we did not grow to think of God as virtually hostile to us; in such a way that His presence and any intercourse with Him would become actually painful to us. All joy and love in the service of God would disappear, and our perseverance would be most uncertain. Without the Gift of piety we should be merely servants of God, day-labourers, debtors and mercenaries instead of children! But with the filial spirit we acquire a most beautiful, tender, sublime and just idea of God, and recognise that He is above measure good and fatherly to us; we interpret everything in His favour, and what we cannot see or understand we leave to Him, merely comforting ourselves with the thought that some day He will, in His wisdom and goodness, explain everything. By this Gift we rest in Him, both confidently and lovingly, and can never find His service difficult or burdensome; for we accept everything with pleasure, patience and love, because we know that it comes from the hands of a wise and gracious Father. Then do we first begin to live for Him, and be zealous for His glory.

The Gift of piety, if we possess it, is equally profitable for our neighbour. In every fellow-creature we recognise a brother, and a real, cordial esteem and affection for him grows up in our heart. The necessities, sufferings and joys of others become our own, and we do all in our power to help and console them. As for any little injuries to ourselves we soon forget them, and in short we all live together like kind and affectionate brethren. The saints and holy souls must be classed under the category of neighbours. Piety makes our hearts turn to them, and the nearer they are to God so much the greater is our veneration for and sympathy with them. The saints extended their sympathy, in a certain way, even to the irrational creatures, because they saw and recognised the work of God in them. As to the Church, the Gift of piety gives us a peculiarly filial love for her, as the institution of salvation appointed by God, and His representative. He who possesses this Gift loves and cherishes nothing more than the Church, with her authority, precepts and customs, and, after God, depends entirely on her. Her joys and sufferings are his, and, full of holy enthusiasm, he is ready to do all he can to defend and exalt her.

The Gift has equal advantages for ourselves. It drives away from our hearts a certain feeling of loneliness and abandonment to which we might be subject when we first detach ourselves from the world and give ourselves to God, on whom we have not yet learned to lean as our Father. Our hearts feel homeless, and we feel scarcely able to bear the pain of our isolation. But it is the blessed property of this Gift to make us feel at home with God, so that we desire nothing else. Even in respect to sin it has the most consoling effects. It reassures us and sets our hearts at rest when we remember past and confessed sins, and, thanks to the filial confidence

with which it inspires us, we are content to leave in God's hands the terrible question whether we are in a state of grace or not. Our daily faults no longer disturb us or cause us to despond, for we know the patience and fatherly goodness of God, and know that He will bear with our frailty, simply because we are His children. Moreover, a filial spirit is the surest safeguard against future sins; for the more filial is the love that we have for God, the more shall we shrink from offending Him.

He who wishes to be perfect must devote himself to the cultivation of this Gift, because of its importance to us in our struggle. Several reasons may be given to show this. First, in order to become perfect we must practise prayer and much prayer, which will become easy and agreeable to us only when we have learned to converse filially with God. Secondly, nobody can attain perfection without confidence and courage in corresponding with the inspirations of God. This will be easy to one, the motive of whose love and confidence in Him is the constant recollection that he is His child. Thirdly, no real striving after perfection is possible without generosity and willingness for sacrifice; and what can make us more capable of generosity than filial love? Fourthly, the road to perfection is beset with crosses and sufferings, and nothing will enable us to bear them better than a filial spirit which sees in everything the hand of a loving Father. Finally, liberty of spirit and self-forgetfulness are the surest road to perfection; and these are the prerogative of children. Perfection may be as a steep mountain which has to be climbed, but in this Gift will be found a strong and helping staff.

These advantages will suffice to show the importance to us of this Gift. It is especially important to the rich and great ones of this world, who are in danger of

considering themselves better than other men. The Gift of piety will put kindness and universal brotherly love into their hearts. It is also very necessary to the avaricious and sensual, because avarice and sensuality harden the heart and fill it with selfishness. But those to whom it is of most importance are the learned, who do not pray much, who attribute all success to natural talent and natural skill, and who place these before the worship of God. The Gift of piety will make them childlike, humble, simple and sincerely kind towards others.

We can do nothing better than labour to perfect and increase this Gift within us; and to this end we must implore the help of the Holy Ghost. He it is of whom Scripture says: "We have received the Spirit of adoption whereby we cry: Abba, Father".¹ He is "the perfect charity who casteth out fear".² And He it is who "giveth testimony to our spirit that we are the sons of God".³

We must also take great care to guard against scruples and anxiety of mind. Nothing is more contrary to a filial spirit than an anxious mistrust of God. We must accustom ourselves to look on Him as our Father, and take care to be childlike in our intercourse with Him, and to occupy our minds by preference with those objects and truths which inspire us with love and confidence in Him. At all times and under all circumstances we must place ourselves on the side of God, put a right interpretation on His ways, and see the amiable aspect of all that He does and permits. If we do this our good works will be more meritorious, and we may be sure of being on the safe road to perfection.

Such are the Gifts of the Holy Ghost; and from what has been said it is evident how precious and de-

¹ Rom. viii. 15.

² 1 John iv. 18.

³ Rom. viii. 16.

sirable their assistance is. They raise and perfect the whole supernatural life, and give us powers and faculties to perform the most sublime actions in the spiritual order. Through these Gifts man becomes a perfect instrument of the Holy Ghost.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

ACTUAL GRACE.

IN order to be children of God it is not enough to possess divine powers, we must also be able to use them. Something, therefore, is necessary besides the interior faculty—and this something is actual grace. We must now consider: (1) what actual grace is; (2) to whom we owe it; (3) how we can render ourselves worthy of it.

1. What are we to understand by actual grace? By it we are to understand a passing, supernatural, interior assistance from God, which makes us able to perform good works helpful to salvation. The assistance is interior, because it relates to the powers of the soul and acts on them—but only in a passing manner, not being permanently in the soul like sanctifying grace and the virtues and Gifts. To be more precise: there being two powers of the soul, the understanding and the will, actual grace is a supernatural illumination of the understanding, and a supernatural incentive to the will, both being moved by it to do something helpful to salvation.

There can be no doubt about the reality and necessity of this grace. We are not aware of the presence of sanctifying grace in us, but we are aware of actual grace, though we cannot always or absolutely distinguish it from other impulses. How often, for instance, do we not feel ourselves—even without our co-operation and often against our will—attracted towards what is good, and impelled towards it? That

is the influence on our souls of actual grace. Nor can there be a doubt about its being indispensable for salvation. This is made clear by both Scripture and tradition. Salvation, and all the works which conduce to it, have as their principle God, the Author of all good. It is God who worketh in us both to will and accomplish,¹ and does in us what is well-pleasing in His sight.² "We are not sufficient to think anything of ourselves as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is from God."³ The Fathers who wrote against Pelagianism say the same thing, though with greater plainness. They compare a man without grace to a branch cut off from the vine;⁴ to an eye without light;⁵ to a bird with only one wing.⁶ The Second Council of Orange declares that "he is deceived by the spirit of heresy who maintains that he can of his natural power do any good work which is profitable for eternal life, or that he can think of it or choose it rightly without the light of the Holy Ghost".⁷ The Council of Trent declares the same thing: "The beginning of justification comes from prevenient grace. By prevenient and assisting grace the sinner is prepared for conversion . . . without the grace of God man cannot make one step towards justice.⁸ He who maintains that a man can, without the prevenient inspiration of the Holy Ghost, believe, hope, love or repent in a manner profitable for justification in grace, let him be anathema."⁹ The Council equally condemns the opinion that prevenient grace is necessary only to facilitate the practice of righteousness and the attainment of eternal life.¹⁰ It follows that grace is absolutely neces-

¹ Phil. ii. 13.² Heb. xiii. 21.³ 2 Cor. iii. 5.⁴ *Arausic*, ii., c. 24; *cf.* John xv. 1.⁵ Chrysostom, *Hom.*, vii., in 1 Cor., n. 14; St. Aug., *De nat. et gr.*, c. 26.⁶ St. Macar., *Aeg. Hom.*, xxxii., c. 6.⁷ Can. 7.⁸ *Sess.* vi., cap. 5.⁹ *Ibid.*, can. 3.¹⁰ *Ibid.*, can. 2.

sary for every good work helpful to salvation ; and is, consequently, an unconditional necessity.

The reason of this necessity is not only that we are in a fallen state, and, therefore, under the curse of ignorance, dissipation and weakness, over which God's grace alone can triumph, but because the works helpful to salvation, being supernatural, require indispensably the help of grace. A supernatural end can be attained only by supernatural means and supernatural works and merits ; and for a work to be supernatural all its phases must be equally so. A supernatural good work must have its beginning in the thought of good, and in the resolution to carry it out. Consequently its very beginning must be under the influence of grace, as is laid down most forcibly by the Second Council of Orange : " The beginning of no good work comes from ourselves. . . . Man does nothing without being enabled to do it by God." ¹ Even as every plant, in order to live, blossom and bear fruit, requires peculiar air, light and heat, so is it with the soul. To work supernaturally the soul requires to be surrounded by a supernatural atmosphere and light, which are given to it by grace. Even the possession of sanctifying grace and the supernatural virtues is not sufficient in itself. The words of Scripture and the Fathers are of universal application, and refer equally to the sinner and the just. Even in the natural life it is not sufficient, in order to see and hear, to have unimpaired senses, for it is necessary that they be put into action and sensibility excited from without. Sanctifying grace and the virtues are in the soul, but without the influence of actual grace they are, as it were, in a state of slumber, and are awakened only by its action.

Actual grace has, moreover, a further effect. Not only does it work on the understanding and will, and

¹ Can. 20, 25.

incite them to good works, but it helps both powers to accomplish good works profitable for salvation. We must, therefore, both as regards the understanding and the will, make a distinction between prevenient and assisting grace. The Councils and the Fathers lay great stress on this. The Council of Trent says: "Justification has its beginning in prevenient grace . . . in the call of grace which stirs and helps us.¹ . . . The power of Christ flows from Him as from the vine into us, its branches . . . and this power precedes, accompanies and follows our good works."² Holy Scripture speaks also of a call,³ a raising of spirit,⁴ a knocking,⁵ a speech,⁶ a teaching⁷ directed by God to the heart; and it speaks also of a drawing of the will.⁸

Prevenient grace, therefore, awakens the understanding, makes it attentive to what is right, and excites the will towards it without any deliberate co-operation on our part: we are free to agree to the impulse or reject it. Prevenient grace is not in itself a voluntary act, but merely the occasion of it: we can follow it or not. But assisting grace is a real influence and help, given to our understanding and free-will, after we have yielded to the impulse of prevenient grace. It is always actually united to voluntary good works and cannot be in reality separated from them. Therefore it is called assisting or concomitant grace, because it includes and supposes our co-operation, causing the same without doing any violence to our liberty. This influence is both moral and physical, because grace enables us to do good works not merely by holding out motives, but by the communicating of a spiritual-physical energy to the powers of the soul which raises and works with them, so that its power

¹ Sess. vi., c. 5. ² *Ibid.*, c. 16. ³ Rom. viii. 30. ⁴ Dan. xiii. 45.

⁵ Apoc. iii. 20. ⁶ Osee ii. 14. ⁷ John vi. 45.

⁸ John vi. 44. See Council of Carthage, A.D. 418, c. 4; *cf. Trid.*, Sess. vi., c. 6, et can. 3, 4.

becomes, so to speak, our power, and the works which proceed from it may be called in truth at once our works and God's works.

But why, then, must the understanding be enlightened as well as the will moved by grace? There are several reasons for this. First, it seems quite natural and fitting that God should assist both powers equally in their own sphere. The most important reason, however, is because both powers are equally incapable of acting supernaturally of themselves, and that both equally require being aided by grace. This assistance of actual grace is of absolute necessity to the just, and how much more, therefore, to those who are not in the state of sanctifying grace, and are deprived of the infused virtues? This want must be supplied, and is supplied, by the powerful effect of actual grace on our understanding and will. The expressions used by Scripture and tradition about the universal necessity of grace for works useful to salvation are so forcible and conclusive that we must take them as meaning that the influence of grace extends to all. Therefore it is that some of the Fathers speak of even a following grace. Under this term, however, there is only to be understood a grace which follows another grace, or which is given on account of another which it presupposes. Others understand by the term the grace of perseverance. St. Fulgentius, for instance, says: "If you read Scripture with humility and simplicity you will certainly find in it, first, a prevenient grace which helps the fallen to rise, then a concomitant grace which enables him to walk in the right road, and, finally, a following grace by means of which he may attain to the happiness of heaven".¹ Thus actual grace embraces the whole work of salvation, and may be rightly called, in one sense, the root, and, in another, the dawn of salvation.

¹*Ep.* 6, *ad Theodor.*, c. 9.

From the universal necessity of grace it follows that it is given to all. As it is indispensable to the salvation of each one, it will be denied to no one who has arrived at the use of reason, whether he be just or sinner, heathen or faithful. Even to the obdurate sufficient grace is offered, either directly or indirectly. It is of faith that the observance of the law of God is possible, for God commands nothing which is impossible, but admonishes us through His commandments to do what we can and to pray for what we cannot do.¹ This is a consequence of God's will to have all men saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth² and penance.³ It is, in other words, a consequence of His truth and justice. The contrary of this could be maintained solely by the accursed, heartless and horrible tenets of the Calvinists and Jansenists. No, even as God created the glorious light for the enjoyment of the natural eye, and the air, plants and beasts for the maintenance of human life, so does He enlighten and warm the soul of man by the rays of actual grace in order that it may live a supernatural life; and even as He causes the sun to shine and the rain to fall on the just and on the unjust, so does He distribute innumerable graces by means of which all men may find the paths of justice and salvation and may be able to walk therein.

2. And to whom do we owe actual grace? Who is the principle and ruler of this realm of supernatural light? The Holy Ghost. Scripture and the Fathers agree in this. The Council of Trent repeats it at least twice. It says that God moves the heart of man by the illumination of the Holy Ghost,⁴ and that man could do nothing without His prevenient inspiration and help.⁵ The Council of Orange says the same thing;⁶ and St. Peter Damian defines thus concisely

¹ *Conc. Trid.*, Sess. vi., c. 11; can. 18.

² 1 Tim. ii. 4.

³ 2 Peter iii. 9.

⁴ *Sess.* vi., c. 5.

⁵ *Ibid.*, can. 3.

⁶ Can. 7.

the action of the Holy Ghost on the soul by means of actual grace : " He (the Holy Ghost) gives light to the understanding, awakens desire, and communicates power. He gives light that we may see, He incites us that we may will, He strengthens us that we may accomplish the good things which we desire." ¹ The Holy Ghost is the Principle and Lord of the supernatural life. Jesus Christ gave Him to us and left Him in his stead to be our Comforter and Helper,² who would teach us all things and bring all things to our mind. This is His mission which He faithfully fulfils, co-operating with the Father and Son for our salvation and everlasting happiness.

The Holy Ghost is, therefore, the Author of those precious impulses which we so constantly feel within us. How many they are ! Not a day, perhaps not an hour, passes that the Holy Ghost does not in some manner work within our souls, by knocking at our heart, speaking to us, drawing us. Sometimes He stirs us up to war against an evil desire or an alluring temptation ; sometimes He calls our attention to some good work and encourages us to do it. He utilises for these inspirations everything—within and without, natural and supernatural, benefit and punishment, joy and sorrow, Angels and men, and all the races and orders of creation. All beings are His voices and messengers, and the bearers of His grace. Sometimes He speaks to us by the beauties of a spring day to draw us from sin and adorn our souls with good works ; or, again, He avails Himself of the silence of a sleepless night to rouse our dormant conscience ; at another time He speaks to us in a sudden danger, in a tempest or by the sudden death of a neighbour, which proves the fleetingness of earthly happiness and raises our hearts to heaven. At other times the mere sight of a holy man or the words of a good book appeal to us ; or,

¹ Serm. 21.

² John xiv. 26.

again, it may be that the Holy Ghost connects His grace with some chance word dropped without premeditation. But the favourite instrument of the Spirit, that wherewith He speaks to us and addresses Himself through the instrumentality of our senses to our heart, are the customs, ceremonies, feasts and all the circumstances of the public worship of the Church. How many holy thoughts and resolutions owe their birth to the services of the Catholic Church! To men whose will is bent on evil the proximity of the Church is irksome and intolerable, because of the holy impulses which seem to emanate from her. How moving is the thought that the Holy Ghost cannot weary of us! Even though He remain shamefully rejected by us, He sends us thousands of invitations to return and be reconciled to Him.

Such is actual grace. If we consider its working we shall see how untiring is the action of the Holy Ghost in encompassing every step we take. The same help is somehow extended to all the millions now living or who have ever lived; but even if we try to realise what this means it will give us only a faint idea of His inconceivable sublimity and divinity. Who but God, so full of power and goodness, could be the Author of such manifold activity? Although countless rays of the grace which He dispenses to us, out of His pure love, are wasted on us, yet He does not cease His beneficent work!

3. Now, what can we do to obtain this grace which is so necessary for our souls? Let us, in the first place, remember that we can of ourselves win no supernatural graces, because no natural power is capable of raising itself to the supernatural. Not even by prayer can the first grace be won, because grace itself is necessary to make prayer efficacious. This is what the second Council of Orange says: "To say that grace will be granted to human (natural) petition would be

to contradict the words of Isaias and St. Paul (Isa. lxxv. 1; Rom. x. 20), for prayer itself is a grace".¹ How frequently and impressively does not Holy Scripture repeat this truth! "What hast thou that thou hast not received?"² "Or who has first given to Him (God)?"³ "He hath delivered and called us by His holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace."⁴

Therefore, without the grace of God we can neither merit grace nor positively prepare ourselves for it. On the other hand, by co-operating with grace already received we can, indeed, positively prepare ourselves to receive new graces and merit the same. In this way a sinner can merit grace only in the broader sense, *i.e.*, he may rightly hope that in view of his good works more actual grace, and especially the grace of conversion, will be given to him; but the just merit new graces in the strict sense of the word. The communication of actual grace belongs, so to speak, naturally to the state of sanctifying grace. And, indeed, if God gives and must give actual grace to all, how much more will He give it to His own children! This is a very consoling thought, and is an additional motive for keeping ourselves in the state of sanctifying grace. Let us thank the Holy Ghost for the innumerable actual graces with which He is always helping us; and let us pray that we may receive them in greater measure.

¹ *Arausic.*, ii., can. 3.

³ Rom. xi. 35.

² 1 Cor. iv. 7.

⁴ 2 Tim. i. 9.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE LIFE OF GRACE—GOOD WORKS AND THE FRUITS OF THE HOLY GHOST.

ALL the operations of the Holy Ghost hitherto considered can scarcely be said to constitute the spiritual life properly so called. Sanctifying grace, the virtues, gifts and actual graces are the essence, conditions and powers of that life, but it cannot flourish unless the powers be converted into action. Life manifests itself by movement and action. These actions are, as it were, the fruits, while the virtues and gifts are the branches, and sanctifying grace the stem and sap of the tree, while actual grace is the light, heat and moisture under the fertilising influence of which the fruits of eternal life ripen. Let us now consider as regards these good works: (1) what they are; and (2) who produces them in us.

I. What are these good works in which the life of grace consists? We can divide them into four classes: those which procure the state of grace to us, those which defend it, those which increase it, and, finally, those which perfect it. To the first category belong all the acts of preparation required of us by God before placing us in a state of grace. It is a universal law of God that a man must co-operate whenever he can. It is true that God gives us the grace of justification and adoption without our co-operation, provided that we have not attained the age of reason. But when we have attained to it God requires a certain preparation on our part, whether we

wish to receive the life of grace for the first time in holy Baptism, or whether we wish to have it restored to us by Penance after we have lost it. In every case an adult must on his side do something. Holy Scripture always represents justification as an act on the part of man. "Turn ye to me, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will turn to you."¹ A man cannot become holy and a child of God unless he himself desire it. God anticipates him by His stirring grace, but he must respond to it and turn to God by faith, hope, penance and charity, and by having recourse to the means ordained by God for placing himself in the state of grace. In this way the process of justification is described by the Council of Trent.² It contains the first category of good works by which man, with the help of awakening and prevenient grace, obtains justification, which thus, in a certain manner, becomes his own work.

The second category of good works consists in the effort and struggle necessary to preserve the state of grace and defend it against the temptations and attacks to which we are always exposed in this life. According to the expression used in Scripture the life of man upon earth is a warfare.³ We have to fight against enemies within us and around us, who ceaselessly press on us, seek to keep us back from our duty and seduce us to do evil. A great portion of our good works consists, therefore, in defending ourselves, under the protection of God and with the help of grace, against our interior and exterior enemies, the necessity being imposed on us of watchfulness, prayer and holy violence, according to our Lord's monitions: "Watch ye and pray that ye enter not into temptation":⁴ "Lead us not into temptation".⁵

¹ Zach. i. 3; Ezech. xviii. 30.

² Sess. vi., c. 5, 6; can. 4, 5, 6; Sess. xiv., c. 4.

³ Job. vii. 1.

⁴ Matt. xxvi. 41.

⁵ Matt. vi. 13.

Thirdly, besides the duty of fighting against temptations the obligation is laid on us of keeping the commandments of God and of fulfilling the duties of our state. This may well be called the ordinary daily task of a Christian, the golden forge wherein he welds his eternal crown. It is to enable us to fulfil these manifold obligations that the virtues, gifts and actual graces are given to us. To do so is their peculiar and ordained end.

Lastly, we crown the supernatural life by perseverance; for he only will be saved who perseveres to the end;¹ and we are exhorted to make sure our calling and election by good works.² Therefore we must preserve the state of grace by the observance of the commandments, the fulfilment of the duties of our state, and by fighting against temptation until death calls us to the reward of a better life. Perseverance is a special grace given to us by God, which does not, however, exclude our co-operation: on the contrary it supposes it. Perseverance, on our side, is nothing but a continuance in good works to the end, and includes all our efforts, from our last justification down to a happy death which wins for us eternal life and brings our good works to a happy conclusion. Good works, moreover, complete and perfect the crown of justice³ by the multiplicity of their effects, both interior and exterior. Not only do they increase sanctifying grace and therewith virtues, merit and glory, but they also obliterate a portion of the temporal punishment due to sin, and with each fresh merit gained draw down new actual graces for the accomplishment of more good works. St. Paul says: "He will multiply your seed and increase the growth of the fruits of your justice".⁴ In the strictest sense of the word we can truly merit the increase of sanctifying grace

¹ Matt. xxiv. 13.

² 2 Peter i. 10.

³ 2 Tim. iv. 8.

⁴ 2 Cor. ix. 10; *Trid.*, *Sess.* vi., c. 16.

and of glory, because God has promised it, and because such an effect entirely corresponds with the dignity of the state of grace.

But what must these good works be to have such effects? In addition to free-will, to the state of grace and the assistance of actual grace nothing more is required of us than a supernatural intention. This is necessary to every work if it is to be meritorious. Scripture always demands such an intention and direction of our will: "Whatsoever you do in word or in work all things do ye in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ";¹ "He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive the reward of a prophet . . . and whosoever shall give to drink to one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, amen I say to you he shall not lose his reward".² The reason of this is that a merely natural motive cannot suffice to gain a supernatural merit. But it is not necessary that the motive should be charity: any supernatural intention suffices. The reward is not promised only to charity, but to any supernatural good work. Just read what our Lord told the rich young man to do in order to gain eternal life. He placed before him the commandments given by God, as that on which the possession of heaven depended.³ The Council of Trent says the same thing when declaring that the reward is promised to those good works which are of God, and by which the law is fulfilled . . . the law commands much.⁴ No definite degree of fervour is prescribed for these works; for fervour, though praiseworthy and meritorious, is not necessary. So long as the action is good and embraces all necessary conditions it produces its effect as regards merit. Otherwise we could have no certainty that we were meriting anything for eternity by our good works,

¹ Col. iii. 17.

² Matt. x. 41, 42.

³ Matt. xix. 17.

⁴ *Trid.*, Sess. vi., c. 16.

because we could not know whether we had attained to the required measure of zeal and fervour.

Such then is the supernatural life—a wondrous combination of powers and divine influences, of progress and fruits for eternal life. The Psalmist draws a beautiful and appropriate comparison between this life of the just and a fruit-tree planted near the running waters, which brings forth its fruit in due season, and the leaf of which does not fall off.¹ By these good works sanctifying grace becomes as a fountain of water springing up unto life everlasting,² and the path of the just as a shining light which goeth forward and increaseth even to perfect day.³ This is the Christian and divine life which St. Paul asked God to grant to his Christian converts—a life which he thus summarises: “I cease not to pray for you . . . that you may walk worthy of God, in all things pleasing; being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God”.⁴

2. Who is it who produces this life in us? The Holy Ghost. He is the Principle of the faculties and conditions of this life; He it is who rouses, maintains and adorns it, and guides it towards its blessed end. As we have seen, the life of grace consists in the practice of good works. These works are attributed by Scripture to the Spirit, and are on that account called the “fruits of the Holy Ghost”. Even as the fruit is the best and the final produce of the tree, so salutary works, pleasing to God, are the fruits and effects of the operations of the Holy Ghost in us. St. Paul writes thus to the Galatians: “Walk in the Spirit . . . but the fruit of the Spirit is charity, joy, peace, patience, benignity, goodness, longanimity, mildness, faith, modesty, continency, chastity”.⁵ These fruits are nothing else than good works pleasing to God,

¹ Ps. i. 3, 4.

² John iv. 14.

³ Prov. iv. 18.

⁴ Col. i. 9, 10.

⁵ Gal. v. 16, 22, 23.

accomplished in us and by us through the help of the Holy Ghost. The Apostle begins by charity, which is obviously a fruit of the Holy Ghost, and proceeds to peace and joy which are the effects of it. Then he passes on to the moral virtues, naming, first, those which relate to our neighbour—goodness and benignity, and then those that relate to ourselves—patience, longanimity and mildness. Finally, he enumerates those which give us dominion over our passions—modesty, continency and chastity.

As was said in the last meditation, good works cannot be accomplished without the help of actual grace. Of ourselves we could not keep the commandments either completely or for long together, nor would it be possible for us of ourselves to overcome all severe temptations, avoid all sins and thus persevere to the end. These are acknowledged truisms, founded on Holy Scripture, about which we cannot and may not entertain a doubt. Therefore is it that Scripture so often exhorts us to watch and pray that we enter not into temptation. There is, however, no question of a physical and absolute, but of a moral, impossibility, because, in consequence of original sin, we have so many exterior and interior difficulties to contend against that they cannot be overcome by our natural powers. To be preserved from actual and personal sins, even the most venial, is a privilege of grace conceded, as far as we know with any certainty, to the Mother of God alone. All but she must, according to the Third Council of Carthage, say truly to God: "Forgive us our trespasses".¹ As for the grace of final perseverance, it is so great a gift that we cannot, in the strict sense of the word, merit it in any way: we can only implore for it by humble prayer, and prepare ourselves to receive it by good works.²

Here we must make one observation. We are

¹ Can. 7.

² St. Aug., *De don persever.*, c. 17.

speaking of divine works pleasing to God practised in deed and in reality. This supposes a determinate kind of actual grace. Therefore we must make a distinction between two kinds of it: that which, though, indeed, it gives us the power to do something conducive to or necessary for salvation, remains, by our fault and because of something wanting on the part of our own free-will, without result or effect. This is called grace simply sufficient. With other grace we co-operate, and by its help accomplish good works; and this we call efficacious grace. Both Scripture and experience testify to the existence of and distinction between these two kinds of grace. How often in Scripture do we not find God complaining that He has called us and done everything for us, and that his voice is not heard by us.¹ How often does He not admonish us that we receive not His grace in vain.² We know but too well that we fail to correspond with many graces, even though we may consent to others. Every good work that we do and every sin that we commit testify to this distinction in grace.

Whence comes this distinction? First, from our free-will, which either consents to or refuses its consent to the grace, being free to make whatever choice it will. Grace does not destroy liberty; on the contrary, free-will is a condition of merit. We are not, however, to understand by this that everything depends on man, or not so much on God as on man. On the contrary, saving our liberty, most, nay all, depends on God. Secondly, the distinction between sufficient and efficacious grace comes from God. Nothing is possible without the assistance of grace. God and man together accomplish the good work, so that it belongs entirely to each, according to the explanation of St. Augustine: "If God effects in us both to will and to

¹ Isa. v. 3 sq.; Matt. xxiii. 37.

² 1 Cor. vi. 1.

do, how can it be said to us, 'Work out your salvation'? Because God so acts in us that we can act ourselves." ¹ But how can this absolute dependence of man upon God be explained in such a way as not to diminish the freedom of our will? Theologians explain it thus: By reason of His infinite wisdom God foresees and foreknows which graces we shall correspond with, and which we shall reject, or, in other words, which graces will be efficacious in us, and which will—owing to our want of correspondence—be only sufficient. If, therefore, God gives us graces, our correspondence with which He foresees, it is clear that the good work depends on the one hand on God, because it would not be accomplished unless God gave us that particular grace; but, on the other, it depends on us, because our correspondence—foreseen by God—is one of the circumstances which He had in view when He determined to give us that particular grace.

This being supposed, it can be easily seen that in every good work that is accomplished God displays extraordinary love and condescension, because He gives us just that grace with which He foresaw we should correspond, and He gave it with the intention that we should with its assistance accomplish a good work. Each efficacious grace is so great a good that we could not merit it in the strict sense of the word. The utmost we can do is to prepare ourselves for it by humble prayer and by the avoidance of anything which could be displeasing to God. If every efficacious grace is so great a good we may infer the greatness of the grace of final perseverance. This grace supposes a number, or, rather, a chain of efficacious and victorious graces, which strengthen and enlighten us in the performance of the duties of our state, fortify and protect us in times of temptation, and accompany us till death puts an end to the strife—graces which

¹ Serm. xiii. c. 3; cf. *De prædest.* SS., c. 3, n. 7.

are given to us by God with the direct intention of assisting us up to the moment of death. The gift of perseverance is the grace of all graces. Hence, the Fathers are unanimous in teaching that perseverance without a special grace is impossible, and, therefore, give it the name of the great gift of perseverance.¹ Thus, in meditating on the life of grace we stand before a great mystery of the wisdom and goodness of God—even before the unfolding and accomplishment of divine predestination. Predestination is realised by the communication of efficacious actual graces.

This brings us back to the Holy Ghost. If the life of grace is chiefly made possible by efficacious graces, and if their distribution is a secret of the goodness of God, we can recognise the part taken in it by the Holy Ghost. He is goodness, love and grace. As such He exercises on behalf of the just His most glorious attributes and the most merciful operations. In illuminating the soul of the just with His graces, in teaching, strengthening and leading it step by step to perfection and a happy end, He proves that He is in very truth the Teacher, Guardian and Educator of men.

First, He is their Teacher, because He is God. Our Lord sent Him to be our Teacher,² and He has all the qualities of such a one. He is full of wisdom and power; He illuminates the hearts of the faithful by His inspirations and light, and leads them in all truth and in the knowledge of duty and virtue. Together with knowledge and light He gives to the will the power and resolution to obey His teaching, giving withal a wondrous facility and sweetness. As Teacher He possesses superabundant love and patience, and is

¹ *Concil. Arausic.*, ii., can. 10; *Trid.*, *Sess. vi.*, can. 22; *St. Aug., De don. persever.*, c. 17.

² *John xiv.* 26.

not driven away by our distractions and ignorance, but repeats again and again the same lesson till we understand it and put it into practice. To no teacher is the progress of his scholars so dear, no other pursues them with such solicitude or shows such inexhaustible patience. Therefore we owe Him the greatest veneration, and are bound to prefer His voice and teaching to the wisdom and counsels of all men and all books put together. We must, moreover, give Him our undivided attention and be zealous to crown His efforts on our behalf with success. To do this will be the best and most welcome return we could make Him for what He does for us.

Moreover, by His effectual and actual grace, He is our Guardian as children of God and heirs of heaven.¹ He cares for us without ever tiring; He takes up our interests and concerns, and places them before the Father with power and authority. What will not He, the powerful Mover of the Father's Heart, be able to do on our behalf? Finally, He seeks to protect us from danger and injury by watching over us when we are tempted, by warning, admonishing and encouraging us, by fighting for us and leading us safely through opposition and contest until we gain the victory and attain to everlasting peace. The Church, in her prayers for the Octave of Pentecost, reminds us frequently of the Holy Ghost's office of protector. "Hostem repellas longius, pacemque dones protinus," she says in the *Veni Creator*; and we find such words as these in the various prayers of the Mass: "Grant that to whom Thou hast given faith, Thou mayest also impart peace . . . defend us from the fury of the enemy . . . grant that the power of the Holy Ghost may be ever present with us to purify our hearts from sin, and to defend us from all adversity. . . . Grant unto Thy Church that being

¹ John xiv.†16.

gathered together in the Holy Ghost, it may be vexed by no assault of the enemy." The pillar of cloud which went before the people of Israel through the desert, which protected them against Pharaoh, sheltered them by day and gave them light by night, is a beautiful figure of the operations of the Holy Ghost both on individual souls and on the whole Church. These words of Scripture can be applied to His protection and guidance: "He found him (Israel) in a desert land, in a place of horror and of a vast wilderness: He led him about and taught him, and He kept him as the apple of His eye. As the eagle enticing her young to fly, and hovering over them, He spread His wings, and hath taken him and carried him on His shoulders."¹

In the last place, the Holy Ghost is our Educator—*i.e.*, He disposes and qualifies us for our end, for our mission here below and for eternal life in heaven. He does all this by the power of His efficacious graces. To these does the Church owe her men of faith, her saints of all conditions, her religious founders, her apostles and martyrs. They all come forth from the interior school set up by the Holy Ghost and untiringly maintained by Him in the heart of every sanctified Christian during His time of probation in this life. He dwells in our heart and soul, He works, He prays, He purifies, He ennobles our spirit. There is no painter or sculptor who devotes himself to his work as assiduously, earnestly or lovingly as does the Holy Ghost to the formation of our souls, which He adorns with virtues and graces, and seeks to change into a likeness of our Lord. No mother is so devoted to her children as is the Holy Ghost to us, none could love as He loves us, or be so eager to teach us to work, pray, speak, think and will. It could not be otherwise. He is so inconceivably near to us, for He dwells in

¹ Deut. xxxii. 10, 11.

the midst of our heart, and has at His command the most efficacious means of forming and educating us. Let us, indeed, rejoice at having Him to educate us; let us be thankful to Him for His love, patience and unwearying operations in our soul! Let us remember how many years He has dwelt in us and worked in us, and how untiring He has been in His efforts, in spite of the small progress we have made. This, however, must not make us lose confidence. As long as He does not give us up we must not give ourselves up. Remember what stubborn obstacles He has overcome, and often all in a moment! Just think of St. Paul or St. Mary Magdalen! The thing to do is to let Him work and never leave His school. Let us give ourselves over to Him with childlike confidence. He will see that we do credit to His teaching. Let us commend ourselves to Him by fervent prayer. Meditate on the beautiful sequence which the Church recites every day in the Mass during the Octave of Pentecost, in which there is made manifest—as will be shown later—the interior work of the Holy Ghost in our souls and their various faculties, the object of which is to lead us on to eternal life.

CHAPTER XXXV.

PRAYER.

PRAYER is one of the most important exercises of the spiritual life ; and on this account we cannot allow it to pass without devoting a special meditation to it. We will consider it : (1) in its importance ; and (2) in its relation to the Holy Ghost.

1. To realise in some degree the importance of prayer, we may look at it from two points of view : first, as the end, and then as the means of the spiritual life. In the spiritual life prayer has, in a certain sense, all the importance for us of the end itself. Our proximate and immediate end here below is the knowledge, worship and service of God. This follows necessarily from our entire dependence on Him and His all-embracing dominion over us, by reason of our origin from Him by creation and preservation. We must acknowledge God and honour Him by our thoughts and actions, simply because we are His creatures. This duty towards God is called religion or worship, and one of its chief exercises is prayer. Therefore, prayer is our first and highest duty, and the real end of our life here below, which is meant to be a fitting preparation for everlasting life.

This duty is so self-evident that even the natural law prescribes that God should be honoured by prayer ; and in every religion of the world the practice of prayer is the chief expression of the worship of God, whether interior or exterior. The Christian religion, or the supernatural life of a Christian, is no

exception to this rule. On the contrary, the Christian, being the privileged and favoured creature of God, is especially called on to render to God a true worship, not only because he is His creature and subject, but because he is the child of adoption whom God has graciously drawn close to Himself with fatherly love. A Christian and Catholic alone has the privilege of rendering to God a true and fitting worship; and his prayer is adoration in spirit and in truth.¹ Therefore it is that the Apostles so frequently admonish us to offer to God the sacrifice of prayer out of a pure heart.² This is why the Church prescribes so much prayer, why she herself prays so much, and desires that no one should pass a day without devoting a portion of it to prayer. Prayer never ceases on the lips of her priests, and the sole vocation of many religious orders is to fan and keep alive the holy flame of prayer; and this will go on till the blessed noonday of eternity shall shine, and the prayers on earth shall be changed into the never-ending *Te Deum* of heaven.

Even from this point of view prayer can be regarded as the end, because it is in itself, as it were, a foretaste of everlasting beatitude. Man's interior happiness consists chiefly in union with God by knowledge and love; and whence comes the happiness of heaven but from the immediate vision, possession and enjoyment of God? And what is prayer? The Fathers and theologians reply that prayer is union with God by the raising of the powers of the soul to Him, by spiritual intercourse with Him, and by the interchange with Him of thought and feeling, by acts of adoration, thanksgiving, love and petition, which acts may take the form of vocal or mental prayer. If it is our business in this life to prepare ourselves for heaven, and if this preparation must be made in conformity with eternal life, what can we do more fitting or better than pray?

¹ John iv. 23.

² 1 Tim. ii. 8; 2 Tim. ii. 22.

Has not the life of prayer a great analogy to the life of heaven? For, what shall we do for all eternity but adore, praise and love God? Consequently, prayer, which is the union of our hearts to God, can, in a certain sense, be regarded as our end, as far as it is possible to attain to it here below. And if prayer possesses so much of the nature of our last end it has also something of its excellence and importance for us.

By this we can judge what sort of idea we should have of prayer. How many motives have we not to value prayer, and to cultivate it zealously and ceaselessly? Can we in reality do any better thing than pray? If our thoughts be the measure of our greatness, and if they be as great as their object, it is evident that nothing could raise us more than prayer, which implies the thought of God. To pray willingly and pray well is the surest sign of greatness of soul. It is the privilege of man and the distinctive mark of the heavenly spirits to hold constant intercourse with God and converse familiarly with Him. This thought ought to move us to constant prayer, and make us take reverent pleasure in it, because by it we unite ourselves to God as our last end. What more could we reasonably want here below? "For what have I in heaven, and besides Thee what do I desire upon earth? Thou art the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion for ever."¹ By such thoughts as these our hearts will be gradually detached from earth, and be turned with gentle force to God, in whom is our true home.

Besides, we must, in a certain sense, treat prayer like God Himself, because it is a converse and intercourse with Him, and by it we offer Him a truly beautiful and precious homage, and thereby fulfil the end of our existence. In fact, prayer renders glory to God in

¹ Ps. lxxii. 25, 26.

the most excellent manner. By it we acknowledge His absolute dominion over us and our entire dependence on Him; we glorify His omnipotence in which is our help, we glorify His wisdom by making use of the means and ways ordained by Him; we glorify His fidelity and truth whereby He has promised to assist us; and, finally, we glorify His goodness, because in prayer we do not rely on our own claims or merits, but solely on His mercy. By prayer we exercise acts of faith, hope, charity, confidence, and, above all, humility. In short, we render to God a true worship, we glorify Him, and we consecrate our souls to be temples of His glory and majesty.

In the second place, prayer is most important to the spiritual life as a means of grace. On the one hand it is universally necessary and indispensable, and, on the other, it is a far-reaching and mighty means of obtaining all that we need. Therefore, if we want graces we must pray. The proverb: "Without grace no salvation: without prayer no grace," is very pregnant. Whosoever is able to pray must ask for grace in order to obtain it. We must have grace; for, as has been pointed out in the preceding meditations, we can do nothing for our salvation without it. It follows that the necessity of prayer is almost as great. This is shown by Holy Scripture. How often and how urgently does it admonish us to pray—to pray always and unceasingly.¹ It tells us that why we do not receive is because we ask amiss.² It points out the reference of prayer to all the important matters of salvation and the spiritual life, such as help in danger and temptation,³ perseverance,⁴ the exercise of necessary virtues,⁵ and, in short, to everything. A glance at the "Our Father" will prove this. Doctors of the Church say that such passages as those given above

¹ Luke xviii. 1.

² James iv. 3.

³ Matt. xxvi. 41.

⁴ James v. 16.

⁵ Wisd. viii. 21.

contain a real command to pray. Except the command to believe, to enter the Church, to obey ecclesiastical superiors, and to receive the sacraments, our Lord imposed no new, positive commandment; therefore, it is to be assumed that when He tells us to pray, He is not issuing a new commandment, but is reiterating that which is contained in the natural law, and that He does not intend it merely as a commandment but as a means, the necessity of which is founded in the supernatural order of grace.

It comes, therefore, to this: If you do not pray you receive no graces—at least you cannot count on receiving them. The Fathers of the Church confirm the view of the necessity of prayer as a means of grace. Those who wrote against Pelagianism say: To deny the necessity of grace is to doubt the necessity of prayer; by which they mean that prayer is as necessary as grace. Such is the teaching of St. Jerome and St. Augustine. The latter says: “No one, we believe, can attain salvation unless God call him to it; no one can work out his salvation without the help of God; and no one can merit this help without prayer”.¹ And again he says: “God gives a few things without being asked, such as the beginning of faith (and, let us add, the grace of prayer), but others, such as perseverance, He grants only to prayer”.² Furthermore, it is the opinion of some great theologians that though God often gives, unasked, extraordinary graces which are not actually necessary to salvation, He does not thus give those which are necessary, if, that is to say, they can be prayed for.³ Prayer, therefore, is one of the most necessary means of salvation, and it is in many cases more important than the sacraments, because the sacraments give us only some definite graces, whereas prayer can gain them all for us. Also,

¹ *L. de eccl. dogm.*, c. 26 (al. 56).

² *De don. pers.*, c. 16.

³ Suarez, *De or.*, lib. 1, c. 18, n. 7.

we cannot, in all cases, receive the sacraments, but prayer remains always open to us, and without it we may easily lose the actual graces to which the sacraments give us a title. The Council of Trent goes so far as to say that prayer is as necessary as keeping the commandments,¹ because God made the grace necessary for keeping them dependent on prayer. This agrees with what St. Augustine says: "God commands nothing impossible; if He commands anything He implies that we should do what we can, and should ask for what we cannot do ourselves".² In many cases, therefore, it may be quite true to say that we cannot keep the commandments, that we cannot resist temptation, and that we feel no strength within us. This is quite possible, but we have the power to pray, and can thereby obtain the grace to do what we are obliged to do.

The reason why God makes grace thus dependent on prayer is not because He does not know what we want, or because He either will not or cannot give it to us, but in order that we may be induced to pray. God knows our needs better than we know them ourselves, and is more inclined to supply them than we could be. Therefore the question is not of what He can do, but of what He sees fit to do. He is the Master of His own graces, and it is for Him to determine His ways and means of giving grace, and it is for us to make use of those means. The great means is prayer, and this for the wisest of reasons. According to the laws of divine Providence it is fitting, nay necessary, that the subordinate causes should co-operate as far as is possible, and, that when it is a question of salvation, creatures should do something towards receiving, or, at least, towards preparing themselves to receive graces; and it is important to bear this in mind. In prayer there is not

¹ Sess. vi., c. II.

² *Lib. de nat. et gr.*, c. 43.

so much a question of inducing God as of disposing ourselves. God is ready enough to listen to us. It is we who put obstacles in the way, and these must be removed if we are to be in proper dispositions. This can be done by prayer. By it we prove that we acknowledge and honour God ; by it we gain virtue and merit, and thus become more pleasing to God, and more worthy of being heard. Apart from the removal on our side of obstacles, prayer is effectual by the response that is made to it, which is, by a decree of God, a peculiar and special effect of prayer. These interior reasons and God's positive ordinance make prayer a thoroughly necessary means of salvation, the more so because it is such an easy and simple means. We may, indeed, ask ourselves whether God could have prescribed anything easier. All the worse is it, therefore, for us if we neglect this means. Would not a man deserve to be drowned in a flood if he would not take the trouble to call for help? From what has been said we may conclude that any confidence of obtaining salvation which is not based on prayer is a false confidence and can lead to nothing but loss.

It is equally true that prayer is a means the efficacy of which is universal. This universality we may infer from its indispensableness. If we are bound to ask for everything it follows that we can receive everything by asking. Experience proves this to be the case. For what is prayer insufficient? The commandments are difficult and burdensome to those only who do not pray ; but he who does pray is like him " whose songs in the place of his pilgrimage were the justifications of God ".¹ Furthermore, neither temptation nor passion can injure those who pray. Joseph in Egypt and Susanna, as well as many others, are examples of this. Though surrounded by temptations

¹ Ps. cxviii. 54.

and dangers, not only did they suffer no harm, but they found in their trial a greater incentive to virtue and sanctity. Encompassed by the blessings of prayer we walk as did the young men in the furnace at Babylon, covered indeed in smoke and flames, yet untouched by them, for the dew of grace, spread over us by prayer, protects us from all injury. By prayer we take hold of the hand of God, and no one can fall who is thus sustained. Finally, perseverance, as we have already seen, can be obtained only by constant humble prayer, and by this means it will be infallibly obtained.

Prayer enables us to attain to the highest perfection; not that perfection by any means consists only in prayer. Far from it, for perfection involves a thorough turning of our hearts away from the world and towards God and the things of God; and to it belong real self-renunciation, perseverance, and generosity in the pursuit of virtue and the fulfilment of the will of God. In short, perfection implies the transformation of our hearts from what is corrupt and merely natural to what is self-forgetful, supernatural and divine. Such is Christian perfection, and for the attainment of it prayer simply suffices. He who knows how to pray well also knows how to live well, and is made, as the catechism says, speaking of the effects of prayer, heavenly-minded and blessed of God. Prayer obtains all this for us by the power of grace, the reins of which it holds, and with which it works on our understanding and will, by transforming them gradually with such sweet and silent power that we are hardly aware that we have become new beings. There is nothing more bitter or unpleasant to the taste than a green nut, yet nothing is more delicious to eat after it has been soaked for some time in sugar. Such is the effect on our souls of prayer if we give ourselves over to it faithfully, generously and per-

severingly. The lives of the saints bear witness to this. By applying themselves earnestly and perseveringly to prayer they learned those supernatural virtues which we admire in them; and thus they became what they were for God and for the Church.

It is not only for ourselves that prayer is so powerful and important. It also benefits our fellow-creatures; and much for their true welfare is effected by prayer. The Apostles and heralds of the faith knew this very well, and, therefore, they prayed as much as they worked. Indeed, the power of prayer reaches farther than the apostolic word. The latter works exteriorly, at the present moment and on the actual audience; but prayer works interiorly, reaches to heaven, and, being fertilised by the power of God, comes back to the world and extends its influence to creatures who are not yet born. It may well be said that the history of prayer is the history of the propagation of the faith. The great victories of Christianity have been won by the solitaries in the desert, in the cave of Antony and under the palm-tree of Paul, quite as much as by the deaths of martyrs, the sacred eloquence of doctors and the labours of missionaries. Whence came forth the defenders and heralds of the faith? St. Augustine says: "The prayer of Stephen converted Paul".¹ By prayer we increase and fructify our zeal for souls.

And in what does this wondrous power of prayer consist? On what does it depend? First, it comes from the goodness and mercy of God. He who prays does not demand what is his due, but begs a favour. By nothing can we be more benefited than by the mercy of God, which on the one hand is almighty, and, on the other, condescends to our necessities and infirmities. Secondly, the power of prayer depends on the fidelity and veracity of God, who has pledged Himself to help

¹ Various sermons on St. Stephen.

us if we have recourse to Him. What promises has not God given to prayer? "Ask and it shall be given you."¹ . . . Whatsoever you shall ask it shall be done to you."² No exceptions are laid down as regards temporal or eternal goods, and no distinctions are made between petitions for ourselves and petitions for others: the sole condition is that the object of our prayer enter into the divine plan. What, therefore, cannot we effect by prayer? What enemies cannot we overcome, what graces cannot we obtain? Man is capable of so much even in the natural order that we might be tempted to say that he can do anything he desires; but of what is he not capable if he have God for his ally, and if he join his strength to the omnipotence of God? Who could set limits to his power? If miracles be necessary to him, behold they are made possible. Prayer works them and has worked them. This is shown by Scripture, which may be called the history of the marvellous effects of prayer on all the circumstances of human life. No natural law can resist prayer, and must yield before its power. Even God is, so to speak, impotent before its might. "Prayer," says Tertullian, "is the only power before which God inclines Himself"³—because it is His will to do so. Thus we can see the immense importance and vast scope of prayer in the spiritual life. Nothing can be excluded from either its necessity or its efficacy. Without prayer, nothing: with prayer, everything! How right is the Psalmist when he praises God for affording us such a powerful means of salvation: "Blessed be God who hath not turned away my prayer, nor His mercy from me"!⁴

2. And who is this God to whom we owe the great grace of prayer? The Holy Ghost. He is the Author and Teacher of the spiritual life; and prayer, which

¹ Matt. vii. 7.

² Matt. xviii. 19.

³ *De Orat.*, c. 29.

⁴ Ps. lxxv. 20.

forms such an important part of this life, must stand in a peculiar relation to Him. We may consider the following words addressed by St. Paul to the Romans from this point of view: "The Spirit also helpeth our infirmity. For we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit Himself asketh for us with unspeakable groanings. And He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what the Spirit desireth; because He asketh for the saints according to God."¹ The Apostle also says in his first epistle to the Corinthians: "No man can say the Lord Jesus but by the Holy Ghost."² The Holy Ghost stands, therefore, in a threefold relation to prayer.

First, it is He who draws and incites us to pray, thereby meeting and helping our first and worst form of weakness—namely, our aversion from prayer, because we have not looked at it rightly. He cures this evil by enlightening us with His grace, by showing us the excellence, necessity and efficacy of prayer, and by infusing into us a desire for it. This is what is most important in prayer; and the interior conviction of its necessity and efficacy may, in a sense, be called its spirit, because without this conviction we should not exercise it in such a manner as to be of real utility. This is one of the most important graces of the Holy Ghost, because the spirit of prayer is the source of all good things to us. Let us respond to His invitation with gratitude and alacrity. Let us open our hearts to it, for it is the principle of all the good things which prayer can bring to us.

Secondly, the Holy Ghost teaches us to pray in a right way, by inspiring us how to pray and what to ask for. He searches the eternal depths of the Godhead, sees what we require, and, as he wishes for nothing more than our happiness in time and in eternity, He teaches us what to pray for—not only as

¹ Rom. viii. 26, 27.

² I Cor. xii. 3.

regards the things which are natural and temporal, but, far more, as regards what will conduce to our salvation. He also teaches us in what manner to pray, and this He does both interiorly and exteriorly. It is the Holy Ghost who infuses into our soul true worship, fervour, desire, filial confidence and perseverance in prayer. He is the Spirit of the Father and the Son, the Spirit of love, the Spirit of adoption and of all holy desire and worship. In this manner the Holy Ghost prays in us with unspeakable groanings, because He communicates interior devotion to us, and is in our hearts what He is in the Heart of the Godhead—the infinite Breathing of love and holy desire. Thus He makes our prayer His, or, rather, He prays in us, and makes Himself the pledge of our prayer being heard. We need only take a glance at the Gifts of the Holy Ghost to see what is the relation between Him and prayer—by which we especially mean mental prayer—in which the Gifts have their closest application and show their noblest effects. Recall what has been said about the Gifts of understanding, knowledge, wisdom, piety and holy fear. Without these Gifts mental prayer worthy of the name would be difficult to imagine. The Holy Ghost also acts exteriorly, in that He makes prayer easy and pleasant by various methods—by vocal and mental methods, by private and public exercise, and, especially, by ceremonial worship, and the devotions which form so many attractions to prayer, and are, at the same time, so many practical forms of it. What a wealth, what a multiplicity of practices of prayer does not the ecclesiastical year present to us! The great drama of faith is played throughout the year in the feasts of our Lord and of His Blessed Mother, with the feasts of the saints as a beautiful variation and accompaniment. All that the mysteries of faith contain that is most salutary, imitable and encouraging is set before us in the

feasts of the saints. The ecclesiastical year with its feasts and corresponding devotions is, as we have said before, the work of the Holy Ghost.

Finally, the Holy Ghost watches over the effect of prayer and sees that it is heard. The granting of our prayer depends on our praying in the right way, and on our asking for nothing displeasing to God. Now this is precisely what the Holy Ghost effects in us. Our Lord says: "I say not that I will ask the Father for you, for the Father Himself loveth you, because you have loved Me".¹ This love of our Lord is effected in us by the Holy Ghost, and the Father cannot but listen to the voice of His Spirit.

We can see, therefore, the closeness of the relation of the Holy Ghost to prayer. Above all, we must thank Him for giving us such an important means of grace, and for the incalculable good He thereby does us. What should we be without prayer? We should be like the earth without light or moisture, *i.e.*, an impenetrable desert land, a place of horror and death. The Holy Ghost quickens and rejoices us by prayer, and makes us fruitful unto good works. If we desire to make a right use of this important means of grace we must render Him especial worship, beg Him to give us a proper spirit of prayer, and commend ourselves to Him each time we begin to pray. If we wish to know how to pray we must enter the school of the Holy Ghost. The school in which we learn to pray is no other than prayer itself, the most important business after that of our salvation.

¹ John xvi. 26, 27.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE SWEET MYSTERY OF THE CHRISTIAN'S LIFE.

MANY and wonderful are the gifts which constitute the spiritual life, and transform it into a truly supernatural mystery; but there is something higher than any gifts, of which they are merely the retinue. We speak of the Lord of all gifts, whose throne they are whence He governs sanctified souls. The Lord of these gifts is the Holy Ghost Himself. We will now consider: (1) whether with sanctifying grace we also possess the Holy Ghost; (2) how this is to be understood; and (3) what advantages we derive from it.

1. With sanctifying grace and with the infused virtues we really possess the Holy Ghost Himself, as distinct from His gifts. This is the teaching of Scripture. Our Lord said: "I will ask the Father and He shall give you another Paraclete, that He may abide with you for ever . . . you shall know Him because He shall abide with you, and shall be in you".¹ St. Paul also draws a distinction between the Holy Ghost and His virtues and gifts. "The charity of God," he writes, "is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Ghost who is given to us."² In this passage the Holy Ghost is set forth as the Principle of charity; so that not only charity, but also its principle, is given to us; nay, charity is given to our hearts because He Himself is communicated to us. From other expressions also, which will be quoted later, it is

¹ John xiv. 16, 17.

² Rom. v. 5.

proved that He Himself dwells and remains in us permanently.

Such is also the general teaching of the Fathers. They say that the Holy Ghost, of Himself and not only by His gifts, sanctifies us and makes us as gods; that He Himself is the source of sanctity in us; that if grace is the ray which illuminates our souls He is the light whence this ray proceeds. By Him, say they, we become partakers of the divine nature; He is the seal which impresses on us the divine image, and, together with it, remains always in us; He is the Divine Unction by which the sweet perfume of Jesus Christ is diffused in us. Even as man is composed of neither body nor soul taken separately, but of both together, so, say they, the perfect spiritual man consists of body and soul in union with the Holy Ghost. Thus speak St. Athanasius,¹ St. Basil,² and St. Irenæus.³ St. Thomas Aquinas says: The evil spirit, being a creature, cannot fill the spirit of another by the communication of his substance, but the Holy Ghost, who is God, can do so. . . . He dwells with His substance in our souls, and makes them good by communicating Himself to us. . . . This does not prevent Him from filling the spirits of the saints with the effects of His power."⁴ By sanctifying grace the creature is perfected to such a degree that it becomes partaker, not only of created, but of uncreated good. The invisible mission of the Holy Ghost does not consist only in the communication of sanctifying grace, but also in the communication of the Divine Person Himself.⁵

This quite agrees with what was said above regarding the nature of the state of grace and of its end. By sanctifying grace we should reproduce in ourselves

¹ *Ep. ad Serap.*, i., c. 24.

² *Contr. Eunom.*, lib. 5, 1, 1; *De Spir. S.*, c. 23.

³ *Adv. Hær.*, lib. 5, c. 6.

⁴ *Contra Gentil.*, lib. 4, c. 18.

⁵ *Summa Theol.*, i., q. 43, a. 3, ad. 1.

as perfectly as possible the supernatural image of God, *i.e.*, of the Three Divine Persons and Their mutual relations. This image can be produced indeed by the Gifts which accompany grace and which give us a created likeness to the Divine Persons. But incomparably more faithful and perfect is the image of the divine life if we somehow possess the Divine Persons Themselves. Then we lead a truly divine life, or, rather, the Most Holy Trinity lives in us, and we are thereby, in a certain sense, possessors of a foretaste of eternal happiness; for, after all, what is the happiness of heaven but the possession of and enjoyment of the Blessed Trinity? The state of grace and our state of adoption are in themselves so grand and bring us so near to God that, to correspond with their grandeur, the possession of the Divine Persons Themselves is necessary. In this manner God in Three Persons, and, therefore, the Holy Ghost, becomes the pledge of our future happiness in heaven, and the pledge is, though incompletely, a part of beatitude. This is why Scripture calls the Holy Ghost the pledge.¹ In this manner alone, *i.e.*, by possessing the Divine Persons in us, can we love God as befits the mutual love of God and His children. In the Holy Ghost, whom we really possess and through whom we respond to the kiss of the paternal love of God, we love as He loves Himself. Finally, it is the nature and end of the invisible mission of the Divine Persons that They not only bestow Their gifts but Themselves in the gifts, making manifest Their inner life, and pouring it on to the creature sanctified by grace.

2. Now what are we to understand by this dwelling of the Holy Ghost in us? Above all, we must not hold that He alone is in us to the exclusion of the other Divine Persons. Our Lord shows that They too dwell in us when He says: "We will come to him

¹ 2 Cor. i. 22.

and will make our abode with him".¹ St. Paul also speaks of a peculiar forming and indwelling of the Son of God in us, and of our bearing His image.² The Fathers of the Church say that we are a temple of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, and lay stress on our being not many temples, but one temple, because we are the dwelling of one power common to the Three Persons.³ From this they prove the divinity of the Holy Ghost, because He governs us and dwells in us equally with the Father and the Son. This is to be understood in no other way. All the exterior relations of the Godhead, with the exception of the Incarnation, are common to the Three Divine Persons, and this is, therefore, the case with Their indwelling and working in the creature sanctified by grace. And if for us to partake of the supernatural life of God it is necessary that the Holy Ghost should dwell in us, it follows that the Father and the Son must also be in us; for otherwise the Blessed Trinity would not dwell in us. In the same way as in the Holy Trinity the procession of the Holy Ghost cannot be conceived without the supposition of the generation of the Son, we can form no idea of the image of the Blessed Trinity in us without supposing our likeness to the Son and His dwelling in us. Moreover, we must not understand by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost that we enter into a substantial union with His Person, for such a union between a Divine Person and a creature took place only in the Incarnation. Even in glory the union with God will consist only in this, that the blessed are made capable, by the light of glory, of the closest possible union with God.

It follows that the indwelling of the Holy Ghost is not so peculiar to Him as to preclude the indwelling of the other Divine Persons. It is ascribed especially

¹ John xiv. 23.

² Gal. iv. 19; Rom. viii. 29; 1 Cor. xv. 49.

³ St. Ambros., *De Sp. S.*, lib. 3, c. 12.

to Him in the same manner that certain other exterior works of God are ascribed peculiarly to one of the Divine Persons, if that work possess and reflect an attribute peculiar to Him. Sanctifying grace is at the root of this indwelling of the Blessed Trinity in a sanctified soul, and this grace is an action and effect of supremest love, and is the greatest gift that God gives to man. Now, as we have seen, the Holy Ghost is, in the Godhead, the Person of Love and the Gift personified; and, looked at from this point of view, grace, and the indwelling of God in us by it, have a peculiar relation to the Person of the Holy Ghost, in that they reflect His personal attributes.

It may be said that Scripture lays greater stress on our union by grace with the Holy Ghost than on that with the other Persons, and makes the indwelling of the Spirit the principle of all sanctity.¹ According to it He is the Principle and Mover of the supernatural life;² and as our body and soul are ours so also is the Holy Ghost.³ He is the Seal, Unction and Adornment of the sanctified soul.⁴ The Fathers say that as the Father and Son dwell in us by the Holy Ghost,⁵ so we also shall be through Him transformed into the image of the glory of God.⁶ The reason of this is that holiness, supernatural spirituality, love and the gift are all personal attributes of the Holy Ghost. Thus He is not only the Principle, but also the Type of supernatural sanctification. From this theologians draw the conclusion that the Holy Ghost, if He were not already in us as God and a Divine Person, would nevertheless have a peculiar right to dwell in us—on a title not possessed by the other Persons; so that, even

¹ 1 Cor. vi. 17; iii., 16; 2 Cor. vi. 16.

² Rom. viii. 14; Gal. iv. 6.

³ 1 Thess. v. 23.

⁴ 2 Cor. i. 22; Eph. i. 13.

⁵ St. Cyr. Alex., *In. Io.*, xiv. 23; St. Athan., *Ep.*, 1, *ad Serap.*, n. 20.

⁶ 2 Cor. iii. 18.

if They did not dwell in us, He by this title would do so. Therefore, Scripture lays great weight on the communication of the Holy Ghost, and places it beside His other gifts and graces to teach us, no doubt, that with His gifts He gives Himself personally, in a way that neither of the other Persons does, *i.e.*, in the peculiar sense mentioned above. The words of St. Paul bear this meaning: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the charity of God and the communication of the Holy Ghost be with you all".¹ This union with the Holy Ghost by sanctifying grace is the final and highest effect, and, as it were, the summit, crown and glorification of grace and adoption. Everywhere else the Holy Ghost is present by His being and by His infinite power and omnipresence, but in us, if we are in the state of grace, He dwells, moreover, by the supernatural operation and maintenance of sanctifying grace, by a special relation as loving and beloved, by a singular condescension, by a peculiar benevolence and special protection accorded to His sanctified creature. By this He reveals His personal attributes and places man in a peculiar position towards Himself.

3. What advantages do we derive from the personal communication of the Holy Ghost? First, we gain an extraordinary dignity which makes us understand in what sense it is that Scripture calls us the temples of the Holy Ghost.² For He does not make Himself present to us, as He does to the rest of creation, only by His divine nature and the natural effects of His power, but also by the supernatural effects of grace, and even by His personal presence. The greatest and most glorious gifts exist to render us worthy to receive the presence of so great a majesty. He who consecrates our temple is the Holy Ghost Himself. We can also see how true it is that we are partakers of the divine nature and children of God.

¹ 2 Cor. xiii. 13.

² 1 Cor. vi. 19.

What reality, what sublimity is given to God's adoption of us by this indwelling of the Person of the Holy Ghost! By His own personal presence He makes us children of God, and hence He is called the Spirit of adoption.¹ Finally, it gives a deep significance to the existence of supernatural sanctity. We are made holy not only by the possession of created gifts, but by the holiness of God Himself—by the holiness of the Spirit who is the Person of holiness in the Godhead. Being the third and last Person of the Blessed Trinity He is the bond of the perfect unity of the Godhead; and so is He in our hearts the golden bond of perfection.²

Secondly, incalculable riches come to us from the personal presence of the Holy Ghost. Above all there is a peculiar love and condescension on the part of God, which expresses itself in peculiar graces and inspirations. God Himself governs and protects us. Hence Scripture says that those are the sons of God who are led by the Spirit of God.³ God sees His Spirit in us, and, therefore, loves Himself in us. "As the Father hath loved Me (in the Spirit)," said our Lord, "I also have loved you."⁴ This truth gives us great confidence in prayer, for we know how near the Holy Ghost is to us; it is, moreover, a powerful motive to unite ourselves with God, it facilitates the leading of an interior life, and enables us to recollect ourselves frequently and converse in our hearts with God. We need not be alone with our thoughts, for we have the Holy Ghost in our hearts, and there we can adore Him, pray to Him, and seek His counsels. This truth, moreover, makes it easy for us to apprehend whence comes the value of good works, and why we can, in the strict sense of the word, merit heaven by them. They are not merely gilded by the glory

¹ Rom. viii. 15.

³ Rom. viii. 14.

² Col. iii. 14.

⁴ John xv. 9.

of sanctifying grace, but shine in the rays of the Holy Ghost Himself.

Lastly, the presence of the Holy Ghost in us is a source of sweetness and delight. To possess God personally we need not wait for the dawn of eternity, for we possess Him already through the Holy Ghost. He Himself and no other is the pledge of the future and perfect possession of God. Thus we have here below already a foretaste of heaven, for not only does God love Himself in us, but we also love Him as He loves Himself, namely, in the Holy Ghost who is given to us. St. Bernard expresses this very beautifully when he says: "O blessed kiss by which God is not only known, but is loved as a Father, for He must be loved as such if He is to be known perfectly. . . . That soul," he continues, "which bears the Spirit of the Son interceding within it may be persuaded that the Father loves it as He loves the Son, because it is conscious that the Spirit of the Son is within it. . . . In the Spirit of the Son it can regard itself as the daughter of the Father, and as the spouse and sister of the Son. It is His sister because it has the same Father, and it is His spouse because it is in the same Spirit. If marriage makes two to be of one flesh, how much more must union in the Spirit make two to be of one spirit."¹ Early Christian art expresses in a beautiful manner the mystery of this interior union of the Holy Ghost with the Christian soul. It depicts the soul under the image of a dove which has gone forth (*profecta*) from the Spirit, and is born (*sata*) of the Spirit. Still more simply, it designates the soul as *spiritus sancta*.²

Thus, in the highest and most sublime sense of the word the Holy Ghost is our Paraclete, our Comforter. Nothing can be compared with the

¹ *Serm. 8 in Cantic.*, n. 9.

² F. X. Kraus, *Realencyclopädie der christl. Alterth.*, Art. "Geist".

consolation which will be our portion in heaven. There will be no more sin, and the sufferings of this life will have been washed away together with the tears which God will have wiped from our eyes.¹ There, all longing for the sovereign good, all desire for our heavenly home will be satisfied in the blessed embrace of God. Such is the consolation of heaven, and such also, in certain measure, is the consolation which the Holy Ghost gives us here below by means of His wondrous presence in our souls. So long as He dwells with us no mortal sin is even conceivable, because it is incompatible with His presence; and His providence preserves us from it so long as our will is right. Trials and sufferings are easily borne so long as His sweet voice speaks in our heart, and the possession of Him is the pledge of our eternal happiness. Therefore, even here below we lead a heavenly life, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of the sons of God.² As a matter of fact the object of our happiness in heaven will not be different in kind from this, though we shall possess it in an incomparably more perfect way. It is in this sense that the Church, in the sequence for Pentecost, calls the Holy Ghost *dulcis hospes animæ*—the sweet Guest of our soul. He is, indeed, a beloved Guest! He dwells with us in reality as our Guest. By His gracious abode He loads us with honours, riches and joys without number. Let us never forget this. Let us honour and love the sweet Guest of our souls; let us make His sojourn agreeable to Him, and let us consider it as the greatest of misfortunes no longer to have Him with us. He can leave us, because it is His will that we shall freely receive Him as Guest, and it will depend upon us whether we keep Him with us for ever or not.

¹ Apoc. xxi, 4.

² Rom. v. 2.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY.

WE must now study some aspects of Christian life so as to see how the Holy Ghost penetrates and sanctifies every state of it. First, we must consider the Christian family, and see how : (1) in its nature ; (2) in its constituent elements ; and (3) in its duties, it is entirely the work of the Holy Ghost.

1. What is the family and what is its nature? It is a society, that is to say, it is a union of individuals for one common end. Man does not live as an isolated entity ; he is essentially social. He owes his existence, as well as his education, to society ; and all throughout his course he lives and works in the society of his fellows. All around him, in narrower or wider circles, he finds societies from the influence of which he cannot escape. The first of these societies is the family.

Another name for the family is domestic society, and it consists in an association of individuals whose end is to further not only their own welfare, but also the increase of the human species ; so that not only does it improve and maintain existence, but gives it. Its principal and legitimate form is matrimony, the contract of which has always been regarded as a religious act, and is now a sacrament by which man and wife, being indissolubly bound together, are the principle and condition of the propagation of the human species. The children and servants of the family expand this conjugal union into a domestic

union, wherein the various members, being subordinate the one to the other under one common head, strive for one end. The Author of this society is God. It was, as we saw farther back, founded by Him in paradise between Adam and Eve, and their union was the beginning of the whole human race and of every kind of natural society.

Such is the nature of the family. The Holy Ghost takes an important part in it. As we have already seen, society is His work, because society is a superior and more perfect condition of existence, and because it cannot subsist at all without reciprocal love. It is said, and rightly, that the Holy Ghost is the Principle of all love and perfection among creatures, because He is love and perfection in the interior life of the Godhead. If He is this towards all creatures, He must be still more so as regards the family, because its end is higher and more divine, for not only does it ennoble and perfect the existence of men, but it is the principle of existence itself. We have already considered the great part taken by the Holy Ghost in the creation of man; but His relation to the family is perfected by the sacramental nature of Christian matrimony. As St. Paul says: "This (marriage) is a great sacrament, but I speak in Christ and in the Church".¹ As Christ and the Church cannot be conceived without the living indwelling of the Holy Ghost, so neither can the Christian family and marriage—as a figure of Christ and the Church—exist without this union with the Holy Ghost by the sacrament. If the sacrament is the necessary and essential foundation of the Christian family, then is the Holy Ghost Himself its Founder. All the sacraments are instruments of the grace and love of the Holy Ghost, and of a living union with Him; and where they are there is the Holy Ghost. Domestic

¹ Eph. v. 32.

society is, therefore, founded on the Holy Ghost, and rests on Him so long as it remains Christian.

2. What are the constituent elements of the family, and who are its chief representatives? The father, mother, children and servants; and all these have an especial relation to the Holy Ghost. The father is the founder and head of the family. He it is who has the right to govern and conduct it; He has a twofold power to perpetuate it: first, in temporal matters by his testament, whereby he secures his material possessions for the future use of his family, and, secondly, in spiritual matters by his benediction which assures to it the assistance of God. What a great, what a priestly being is the father of a family! However, in all his dignities he acts only as the representative of the Holy Ghost, from whom proceeds the priestly authority to command and to bless. Often, when a father's hand has been raised to bless, and his dying benediction has been given, his words have been the expression of great mysteries and prophecies destined by the Holy Ghost to renew the world. To recognise the truth of this we have merely to recall the blessings of Isaac¹ and of Jacob.² What the priest is to the Church that is the father to his family, namely, the visible representative of the Holy Ghost.

Then there is the woman—the wife and mother—so noble in her origin from the side of man, so noble in her vocation as his companion and help-mate in the foundation and government of the family, so honourable and touching in her mission of love, self-sacrifice, solicitude and suffering. What a beautiful image is she of the Holy Ghost, an image which finds its perfect realisation both in the Church and in the sorrowful Mother standing at the foot of the Cross. Then there is the child born of her, with its

¹ Gen. xxvii. 27.

² Gen. xlix.

glorious future before it, with its capabilities and position in the family, which it completes, stamps with its mark, and fills with joy and delight. It is a beautiful and lovable revelation of the life of the Holy Ghost in the bosom of the Godhead. Then, lastly, there is the servant who, regarded from a Christian point of view, is not merely a day-labourer and hired servant, but a member of the family, not by blood relationship, but by the bond of love and fidelity on his side, and on the side of his master by the bond of condescension and respect for his poverty and humble condition. The servant represents those attributes of the Holy Ghost which we have already considered when enumerating His fruits: charity, joy, peace, patience, benignity, goodness, longanimity, mildness, continency, chastity.¹ In this way every member of the family is related in his own way to the Holy Ghost, of whom the family becomes in very truth the kingdom and sanctuary.

3. The duties of the family are reciprocal help and reciprocal services which enable all to attain together the end of this earthly life. This end consists, primarily, in a fitting measure of temporal prosperity, and, further, the service of God and the attainment of salvation. Such is the duty of the family, and for this it must be united so that its members may strive to obtain by union what would be impossible to the individual. Each member is bound to offer what help he can to the others, and supply to them what they have not got. The father and mother should, therefore, support and stand by each other and utilise his or her faculties to make the other happy in time and eternity. The first thing that has to be considered is the temporal and material condition of the family as the basis of its existence. This duty is fulfilled by a prudent care of possessions and by work in a reasonable

¹ Gal. v. 22, 23.

measure. Then follows the care of the spiritual possessions of the family: unity, love, sociability, kindness and a general exercise of solid piety, for without these the family cannot attain its end. Even from a natural point of view, domestic life without these spiritual possessions would be a state of torment and misery.

The most important duty in the family is the education of the children; for the meaning of education is the forming of man and the development of his capabilities for his immediate end, his life on earth, and his remote end, eternal life. In a word, to educate a man means to make him ready for the end for which he was placed on earth. The right to educate belongs exclusively to parents. Only they and the Church have the right to educate, and they alone can do it, because they alone possess the necessary means, namely, authority and the love which is indispensable for the forming of a child; for he, being free and master of his own powers, is, at the same time, corrupted by original sin and requires to be guided by efficient authority and to be treated with the greatest consideration, affection and patience. Only the heart of a father or mother is equal to this. God, the Father of the child, shares with them both His divine authority as Creator and His divine compassion. He who educates a child accomplishes a truly divine work and deserves the thanks of his country, of the Church, nay more, of God Himself.

This will be sufficient to show us how indispensable the help of the Holy Ghost is to the family for the attainment of its end. This applies even to the management of his temporal affairs, for, as we have already seen, prudence, counsel and capacity for business come from the Holy Ghost. To comprehend this we have but to remember the story of Joseph in Egypt who, as Scripture tells us, was full of the Spirit of God, and

was a prosperous man in all things.¹ As concerns the virtues, it is evident that they are the fruit of the spiritual life, which is essentially the school of the Holy Ghost. For this purpose did He raise matrimony into a sacrament that it might be a means of special grace and strength for the fulfilment of the duties of family life. The blessings of the sacrament extend through all the circumstances and occurrences of family life, and shed graces upon them which smooth the way before them and direct them towards their final end. Who can fail to see that education is a function peculiar to the Holy Ghost? He guides and governs the Church, which was instituted for the education of all mankind. He has created man with the most splendid faculties, which He is for ever developing and perfecting. This applies more especially to the supernatural life. His grace effects everything in us; and without His interior voice and inspirations nothing that parents or teachers can do for a child will be of any avail. By faith He infuses supernatural principles, by the help of His grace He tames passions, uproots evil habits and implants virtues. Above all He infuses love into the hearts of parents and teachers, which gives them patience with the child; and, on the other hand, He infuses into the heart of the child a spirit of dependence on his parents, and docility and humility towards them. Without the Holy Ghost no spiritual education would be possible. As years pass and a man's faculties are formed, it is the Holy God who assigns to him his vocation and the field in which he is to work for human society.

Thus we see how the Holy Ghost pervades domestic life. He is there by rightful possession, and reveals His activity in the most efficacious manner, because of the supreme importance of the family for society,

¹ Gen. xxxix. 2; xli. 38.

for State and for Church, and even for heaven. To it the State owes its heroes, and to it the Church and heaven owe their saints. If Jacob's ladder was a figure of struggling and glorified humanity sanctified by the Church, the family may well be called the stone on which it rested. This stone is anointed with the blessings of the promise; and on the top of the ladder is the throne of God Himself.¹ The Holy Ghost is the Founder, Leader and Perfecter of the Christian family. His eye rests with complacency on this beautiful creation, from each member of which there shines a ray of His own beauty. The Holy Ghost loves the family. It is a touching revelation of His divine nature, and whoever attacks it is an enemy of the Holy Ghost.

It is, therefore, most fitting that the Holy Ghost should be known, loved and honoured in the family as its Head and Soul. There is no member of the family, whether father, mother, child or servant, who has not some special reason for confidence in Him. Those especially to whom is entrusted the divine work of education are given a sacred opportunity of honouring the Holy Ghost. No one can fulfil this office worthily unless he be illuminated by Him and respond to His inspirations. Therefore parents and teachers should have a special devotion to Him, and should not let a day pass without commending their charges to Him. Happy the family whom the Holy Ghost governs! How happy and peaceful is its life. We can see this illustrated in the Holy Family of Nazareth and also in the family of the Church. A truly Christian family is an image of that most sublime type of all societies, the Blessed Trinity. How different would it be with some families were its members to practise devotion to the Holy Ghost instead of subjecting themselves

¹ Gen. xxviii. 12.

to other spirits—the spirit of the world, the spirit of self-love, and, above all, the spirit of Satan, who is ever seeking to drive the Spirit of God from His home, to the great injury of that domestic society founded by God, and of all human society.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE CHRISTIAN STATE.

THERE is another form which the association of men for a common end takes, namely, public life, whether as a municipality or State. We will, therefore, now consider: (1) what constitutes Christian public life; (2) what relation the Holy Ghost has to it.

1. What are we to understand by well-ordered public society? Taken generally, it is an expansion and development of the family by its union with other families to form one commonwealth. It is the will of God—as the beginning and end—that every individual should reach his aim, and He, therefore, provides him with means sufficient for the support of his life, both natural and supernatural. To procure these means He has founded permanent societies. Chief among them are the Church and the family, without which man could not exist. Usually speaking the family cannot attain its end unless it be united to a larger society; for only by such a union is it put in possession of that abundance of means necessary to its end. Fundamentally, a municipality is nothing but a union of several families under a common head; as a State is nothing but a union of several such municipalities under one general head. The union of the family with other societies procures for it, first, the means to its end which would otherwise be beyond its reach, and, secondly, enables it to defend the possession of those means. The means at the disposal of either municipality or State are, directly,

merely natural, and have for their end only the temporal welfare of individuals and families; but, indirectly, the end is supernatural, inasmuch as the State can and must protect and aid the Church by material means, thus to enable her to discharge her supernatural mission more easily and efficiently. The Church, as a superior society, has especial care for the supernatural means, while it is the duty of the State to help and protect the Church in her application of these means, and to protect her subjects in their use of the same.

To promote and facilitate this common end is the essential duty of the Government, which is represented by its head. The head of a municipality or of a State is the mouthpiece of the will of society as distinguished from any of its individual members, and still more is he the representative of God, because God is the Author of public society as well as of the family, and because all power and right come from Him. The authority of the sovereign, or supreme governor, is, therefore, sacred, because it comes from God, is in itself subject to the law of God, and grants rights and establishes laws according to the law of God. The authority of the sovereign is, moreover, universal, in so far that it embraces all other authority and extends to all; nevertheless it is limited, because in the making of laws and the administration of justice it has to conform itself to the law of God and respect the end of the society which it represents. But even as God, in His wisdom and goodness, imparts to His creatures a portion of His own governing authority, so does the sovereign of a State impart to others a portion of his authority, being impelled thereto by condescension, wisdom and necessity, because he cannot be everywhere and direct everything himself. These sharers in his authority are the State and municipal officials, who, with the sovereign, constitute

the Government. The people are the portion of the society which obeys. Wisdom, justice and gentleness, and, above all, the observance of the Ten Commandments must be the foundation of the Government of any commonwealth. If this be the case the Government will act according both to God's will and to reason. But to be a Christian and Catholic State it must recognise the laws of Christian revelation, and must make them its first thought. It must acknowledge the Catholic Church to be what she is, namely the one true and independent possessor and administrator of the spiritual power confided to her by our Lord Jesus Christ, whereby to lead men to eternal life; and it must uphold and protect her in the enjoyment and exercise of that authority.

Such is Christian society and the Christian State. In God's designs the State is no mere gigantic force, no monster of power and authority armed with law and weapons, no necessary evil, so to speak. It is something sublime indeed, and powerful, but, at the same time, beautiful, fatherly and divine. The State comes from God and receives its power from Him. It is His representative in temporal matters, and, as says St. Paul, the minister of God for good, not for evil.¹ It is not allowed to abuse its authority, either as regards God or as regards any superior power; nor may it use the same to the detriment of the people. The theory which makes the State separate from God is unjust, false and destructive, as also is anything which seeks to make it an independent, universal ruler taking the place of God. All such opinions are detestable caricatures of the grand institution founded by God, and are the invention of hell, which desires to make individuals, families and States the enemies of God. The godless spirit knows that the State can be a most powerful and far-reaching

¹ Rom. xiii. 4.

instrument for the furtherance of its pernicious plans, as can be but too well seen in the case of those States which have turned against God. A Christian State is the most glorious and noble of all God's natural revelations here below, but a godless State may well be called a kingdom of Satan, or even the first-born of Satan, for nothing can surpass it as a power of evil. It is a veritable Moloch, which sacrifices to its own supremacy all the societies embodied in it, and crushes them in its iron arms.

2. Let us now see the relation of the Holy Ghost to Christian States. He is the Principle of love, unity and concord; and if this gives Him such a close relation to the family and to every society, how much closer must be His relation to the State which unites in itself not only individuals and families, but whole societies? In the State the Holy Ghost is manifested as the Principle of the highest and most powerful of all natural societies. The just end of the State is neither egotism nor the oppression of individuals; on the contrary its end is noble and unselfish, namely, the protection and maintenance of the rights of its subjects. There exists nothing more noble and unselfish than a Government which exercises its authority according to the designs of God, for thus it cannot be used for its own ends, but for the common welfare. Such a ruling power is, without doubt, the most beautiful image of the divine goodness, represented by the Holy Ghost. The common welfare can be obtained solely by law and order, and here, again, we see the hand of the Holy Ghost, to whom all order is especially ascribed. As of old He set the wild chaos of the natural elements in order, so now does He regulate human society by good and just laws drawn from the Ten Commandments, which bear the stamp of His Majesty, and demand respect and submission in His name. As regards the head of the State, it is not in

vain that kings are anointed with the oil of wisdom, power and mildness. Without the Gifts of the Holy Ghost no king could govern according to the designs of God. Therefore it is, as we have seen before, that all the greatest and most influential men of the Old Testament, and all their great deeds, are manifested in Holy Scripture as having a peculiar relation to the Holy Ghost.

We can also see the action of the Holy Ghost in the harmony that exists between governor and governed. On the one hand He inclines the heart of the sovereign towards his subjects with a spirit of justice and clemency, and, on the other, He inclines the people to submission, respect and loyalty towards their ruler. It is He who infuses benevolence, love, patience and moderation into the hearts of the people, and unites rich and poor, possessors of means and those devoid of them by a bond of brotherly love. He it is who kindles in the hearts of princes and people a spirit of peace, reconciliation and moderation in regard of other nations, which banishes war and discord, and thus lays the foundation of all temporal prosperity. From Him also comes that noble spirit of patriotism which is so dear to all nations, and which has inspired the most glorious deeds recorded in the history of the Church and of the world. Who can read without emotion the heroic struggle of the Machabees for the liberty and independence of the chosen people? Even as the Holy Ghost infuses a love for the Church into our hearts, so also does He infuse into them the love of country and earthly home. This love is nothing but an extension of the Gift of piety, which precludes all narrow-hearted or extravagant nationality, enables us to extend our love to other nations, and fills us with universal love.

Above all, it is the Holy Ghost who infuses into the hearts of governors of States a spirit of humility and

justice as regards the jurisdiction of the Church. It is the duty of the State to protect and uphold the Church, because she constitutes the highest form of society and is founded directly by God, because it is His will that she should be honoured, and because it is greatly to the interest of the State that she should be honoured, as it cannot prosper without her. The unity of Church and State is the essence of Christian society, as can be seen in the ages of faith. The idea of a Christian State comes from the Holy Ghost and can be realised only by Him. He has conceived the plan of the Church, and also, though less definitely, the plan of the State, and has stamped them with the seal of His attributes. Even in the natural creation, great States and confederations of nations stand forth as magnificent works of the Holy Ghost, and although, because of the conditions of their origin and their actual purposes, they do not always reflect His image, nevertheless they become in His hand the most powerful instruments of His designs of mercy and justice. Take in witness of this the ancient Empires of Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome, which worked indirectly for the Jewish Church. They mixed with it, they punished, they purified and propagated, thus preparing the world for the Messiah and His Church of the New Covenant. In like manner the Teuton pagan races which the Holy Ghost called from the North were used by Him to realise the ideal of the Christian State. When they had been brought into contact with the Church they soon recognised in her their mother and mistress, and received from her both the grace of Baptism and the blessed mission of renovating the old world and founding Christian society.

Let us admire the power shown by the Holy Ghost in this great creation, and in the way He amalgamated such apparently incongruous elements into one beauti-

ful unity. Let us also thank Him for all the good and great things which He has done by means of really Christian States for the elevation and propagation of the faith and for the salvation of men. Let us especially beg Him to raise up, in our own times, good and holy rulers, and truly Christian statesmen and States such as He loves. They are infinitely important for the glory of God and the salvation of souls; and blessings or curses for millions of human beings rest in their hand. But, alas, how few Christian princes or Christian States there are! True, many are Christian in name, but their attitude towards the Catholic Church is either hostile or suspicious; and few there are who venture to even call themselves Christian. Externally, impelled by jealousy, ambition or race-hatred, nations are for ever preparing for war; while, internally, agitation, mistrust and envy are everywhere rife. And what misunderstandings and revolts prevail between rulers and subjects! On all sides we behold a spirit of egotism, and nowhere can we perceive any true appreciation of the increasing peril to society, or realisation that it is standing on the brink of an abyss of universal anarchy and unbelief.

Prayer for the State is most necessary, and no other prayers could be better bestowed, or more conformable to the will of God. St. Paul says: "I desire that supplications, prayers, intercession and thanksgivings be made for all men, for kings and for all that are in high stations: that we may lead a quiet and a peaceable life in all piety and chastity. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one Mediator of God and men, the Man Christ Jesus."¹ But the godless State

¹1 Tim. ii. 1-5.

refuses to have anything to do with Him, dethrones Him and banishes Him from public life, from its laws, from education, from the family and from conscience. We are working for Christ's glory if we do all we can to restore Christian society and the Christian State. How much better to offer up our prayers for this object than for our own little domestic troubles and the removal of the trifling inconveniences of daily life. He who has a high appreciation of the glory of God and the salvation of souls will pray especially for all pious associations which have this for their object. At the present time nothing can have good results without united action, and how better could we stem the tide of evil, which is strengthened and organised by thousands of societies, than by promoting similar societies among God's servants, united and strengthened by the bond of faith? Many such societies and institutions exist, but their results are small because the blessing of prayer is wanting to them. Let us scatter this blessing on them with full hands. If we cannot found or start good societies, at least we can, by our prayers, support such as already exist. Blessed those holy men and women who make prayer for princes and all in authority one of the chief tasks of their lives. Who need prayer more than they? Who are capable of doing more for God's glory and the welfare of men than they? Let us pray the Holy Ghost to send us rulers like Charlemagne, St. Henry, St. Louis and St. Edward, and then the face of the earth will be renewed.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE SCHOOL OF CHRISTIAN PERFECTION.

BY Christian perfection is to be understood no more than a singular degree of excellence in the Christian life, such as we have described it. This perfection can be acquired in any Christian state of life, and, in this sense, every state is a school of Christian perfection.

But there exists in the Church a further state which is a school of perfection in a stricter sense of the word, because those who enter it bind themselves to make use of special and peculiarly efficacious means for the attainment of perfection. We mean the religious state, which may be defined as that in which men or women live as members of a religious society approved by the Church, and which binds those who adopt it to strive for Christian perfection by the observance of the three religious vows, in the sense determined by their particular rule. The end of the religious state is, therefore, the acquisition of perfection at the cost of strenuous exertion. Perfection itself consists in the love of God. The essential means of acquiring perfection in the religious state is the observance of the three principal evangelical counsels: poverty, chastity and obedience, under the form of irrevocable vows, determined, as said above, by each individual rule. In this respect the religious state differs from every other Christian state of life. All others have for their essential end that perfection only which consists in the observance of the commandments; where-

as the religious state contains as its end the perfection to be attained by the observance of the evangelical counsels, which, as the name implies, are optional. The object of the religious state is to serve God more perfectly in this manner and to attain to a higher grade of eternal happiness.

Such, in a few words, is the nature of the religious state. Let us now consider what is the relation of the Holy Ghost to it. This is threefold: (1) in connection with the institution of religious Orders; (2) in connection with their formation; (3) in connection with their mission in the Church.

1. By the institution of religious Orders we are not to understand the institution of the religious state itself; for that was the work of our Divine Lord. He founded the religious state as an integral part of the organisation of the Church, and enjoined the observance of the evangelical counsels on His disciples and on all who wish to strive for perfection. This is the religious state as the principle on which all Orders are based, and on which they must be carried on. Based on this principle many and various Orders have been founded, with divers objects and divers means; and it is the foundation of these individual Orders which we assign to the Holy Ghost. No Order can spring up in the Church without His operation and inspiration. It is He who, of His wisdom, calls those who are to found them, inspires them with their idea and plan, and stamps both them and their work with the peculiar sanctity and gifts which are to be their characteristics. There can, as a rule, be no doubt of this. The Church has recognised it as regards the founders of the greater Orders, and has declared them to have been the instruments of the Holy Ghost. Thus, in their bulls confirming the Society of Jesus, both Paul III. and Julius III. affirm more than once that the Holy Ghost inspired and enlightened its

holy founder. The same thing is true of the Orders of St. Benedict, St. Francis, St. Dominic and others.

But this does not suffice. No Order can be legitimately started in the Church unless it receive the confirmation of the Holy See. This confirmation comprises two things: first, it declares the rules of the new Order to be good and moral and quite in harmony with the precepts of the Gospel; and, secondly, it confers and determines the rights, powers and privileges of the Order. Only when all this has been done can it be said that the Order is fully founded. The first part of the confirmation is an act of papal infallibility, because the Pope decides that the rule is good and in accordance with revealed truth; the second part is an act of papal jurisdiction. Both acts belong to the teaching- and pastoral-offices of the Church, and emanate alike from the Holy Ghost who guides the Church in all her definitions, and in the distribution of her offices.¹ Nothing of importance takes place in the Church without the intervention of the Holy Ghost, and who can deny the importance of the foundation of an Order, on which the glory of God and the salvation of souls so greatly depend?

The Holy Ghost thus gives to the religious his house, his home and his family, so that, in the company of others like-minded with himself, he may devote himself to the great work of his own sanctification and the salvation of the world. Each Order is justified in saying that it is in a peculiar manner the work of the Holy Ghost; for if every lawful association with a Christian object has the Holy Ghost for its principle, and if the family, especially, is His work and image, how much more can this be said of a religious family? How many of its features make it the image of the Holy Ghost! Its end is the spiritual life and per-

¹ 1 Cor. xii. 5.

fection which is the fulness of charity. This end is not adopted under compulsion, but freely, from love of God, and is sought by means designed for no other purpose but the attainment of perfect charity. The results are works of the love of God and of brotherly love. Thus the Holy Ghost is in very truth the soul of the religious family. And if His eye rests with complacency on every spot where hearts are bound together in love and sanctity, how great a pleasure must He take in a religious house of which He is the Founder and Ruler? Happy those who belong to the religious state, for there exists no earthly lot more beautiful, excellent and secure. How thankful ought those who are thus called to be to the Holy Ghost who has loved them so much and has had such fatherly care for them!

2. A religious house must be inhabited, and its inmates must be trained to fulfil the end of their Order. The Holy Ghost takes this office on Himself, for from Him proceed all vocations to the religious state. When our Lord came forth from the waters of the Jordan full of the Holy Ghost, and was led by Him into the desert,¹ He was the type of every vocation to the religious state. The Holy Ghost is, as we know, the Principle of both preventing and assisting grace. From Him, therefore, comes that inexplicable discontent with the world felt by souls whom He has called; from Him comes that irresistible longing for greater liberty of spirit, for something higher and better than can be found in the world. From Him also comes the fervour with which those called devote themselves so exclusively to the business of their salvation that they cannot escape fast enough from the Sodom in which they find themselves. From Him, again, comes their holy impatience to be doing something great and extraordinary for God, which pur-

¹ Luke iv. 1.

sues them like a prick of conscience. His is the inviting voice which speaks as from a better home, and says: "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people and thy father's house".¹ This voice is so alluring and sweet that it has torn and still tears thousands from a life of ease and from the love of parents and brethren. It is the voice of the Holy Ghost which invites the soul to unite itself to Him. Thus did He call St. Antony, St. Paul, St. Benedict and the thousands who peopled the deserts and mountains, woods and valleys, cloisters and laura of the East and West. He attracted some gradually and with gentle violence, while others He conquered, as it were, by storm, filling them with the fear of the divine judgments; but one and all owed to Him the grace of vocation.

Once He has given the invitation, the Holy Ghost begins to work in the soul of him whom He has called, so as to fit him for his immediate mission, namely, his own perfection. This end is gained by the Holy Ghost in a threefold manner—by the purgative, illuminative and unitive ways. He first purges the soul from its sins and the dominion of the passions by penance and mortification. Then He kindles in it a desire for virtue, which He plants in the ground already prepared, and cultivates, so that it may grow strong and bear the fruits of merit and good works. Lastly, in the unitive way, having taken possession of the soul in the name of charity, to which He subjects all its senses, faculties and aspirations, He draws it nearer and nearer to Himself until it is in truth filled with Him. He also trains him whom He has called externally, as far as such training is necessary for his vocation, and fits him for it by developing those natural talents and faculties which will aid him in his work among men.

¹ Ps. xlv. 11.

And how does the Holy Ghost effect all this? Apart from those graces and means—such as prayer and the sacraments—which are at the disposal of all Christians, and of which none make more use than religious, it is by the rule and discipline of the Order that the Holy Ghost brings the whole life of the cloister into harmony with the will of God. Therefore the religious sees the guidance of the Spirit in his rule, and guards himself most carefully against any violation of it. Another means employed by the Holy Ghost is the direction of superiors, which constitutes a living rule by which the letter of the law is interpreted and applied to every occasion. Obedience to superiors fills such an important office in the training of a religious that he is bound to reject everything which is either contrary to or independent of it. Where the superior speaks there speaks the Holy Ghost, and to withdraw from obedience to the superior is the same thing as to withdraw from the guidance of the Spirit. But the most important work of the Holy Ghost is in the hearts of the religious. Everything we have said about His work as Teacher and Comforter of the faithful applies in a higher degree to His work in the hearts of religious, for the end to be gained is most difficult and sublime, namely, Christian perfection. In this we see a striking manifestation of His infinite wisdom, which works gently and naturally, yet forcibly and in a variety of ways; and the power of His grace, which overcomes all difficulties, effects marvellous transformations in the thoughts, feelings, principles and aspirations of men. Again, it shows us His infinite goodness and gentleness, and the divine patience with which He bears with our ignorance, frivolity and infidelity, and never forsakes those whom He has once called. More than all, we see the invincible power of His consolations and divine sweetness. A religious needs consolation,

especially in the beginning when, deprived of his favourite habits and trusted friends, he feels like a child who has been robbed of its toy ; and when the struggle of his new life might well fill him with sadness and despondency. Then the Holy Ghost comes to his rescue, and by infusing sweetness, courage and confidence into his soul shows him sensibly that there are enjoyments to be found in His service far more noble and satisfying than any that can be found in the world. Thus his heart becomes at home in God, he forgets the world, and gives himself over to the teaching of the Holy Ghost, who works ceaselessly in him, chiselling, painting and gilding his soul until that most holy of images, a man of God, grows under the hand of the almighty Workman.

The religious state is, in truth, a school of sanctity. We shall know the beauties of this work of the Holy Ghost only when we behold the glories of the heavenly Jerusalem and its blessed hosts. Oh, what a heaven within heaven! There are some Orders which can count their canonised saints by hundreds. Out of the five hundred who have been declared saints or blessed during the last three or four centuries nearly three hundred belong to religious Orders. By this we can see that the religious state has remained what it was God's intention it should be, namely, the nursery of Christian perfection.

3. Let us now consider the mission of the religious Orders in the Church. The first and immediate object of the Holy Ghost in calling and forming religious is their personal perfection. But this is not all ; for to this object He unites one more general. In founding an Order He has in view the glory of God and the good of the Church, and uses the perfection of individuals as a means for the salvation of the members of God's Church on earth. He does this in a twofold manner, according as the Orders are contemplative

or active, or, in other words, according as their chief end is perfection or direct work for souls. Both these classes have a vast field of labour in the Church.

Contemplative Orders sanctify the world, primarily, by the example they hold up of penance and self-sacrifice. They are the lighthouses, the living sign-posts set up on the way to heaven. By their existence and manner of life they remind the world of its eternal end; they are the vanguard of eternity for the warning and judgment of those who have turned away from God. Furthermore, they sanctify the world by their oblation. They are the living victims who day and night crucify and immolate themselves to satisfy divine justice, and obtain pardon and mercy for their poor fellow-men. Finally, they sanctify the world by their prayer. Prayer is the means of sanctifying exterior works, of kindling an interior spirit, of preventing sin and of disarming the justice of God. It is the contemplative Orders which keep the balance in human society, and without whom the world could scarcely exist. Thus the contemplative Orders have a most important mission in the Church and world; but apart from this, is it not fitting that there should be some human societies which give themselves entirely to God, and the work of whose life is to praise Him? There are societies for everything, so why should there not be one exclusively for the service of God?

Very often the contemplative Orders share the duties of the active, whose end is to work directly for the salvation of souls, either as priests, missionaries or teachers, or else by their pens. How many of such instruments has not the Holy Ghost chosen out of religious Orders? Take—to mention only three—take St. Columba, St. Boniface, St. Francis Xavier! The conversion of nearly the whole of the North of Europe and of the New World was the work of mis-

sionary religious. Ecclesiastical as well as secular learning, as also other important features of civilisation, for instance agriculture and the arts, were encouraged by men of the cloister. The religious Orders have, moreover, done much for the government of the Church by the number of Popes and Bishops whom they have contributed to it. The Benedictine Order alone can count twenty-eight Popes, two hundred Cardinals, sixteen hundred Archbishops and four thousand Bishops. It is a fact that for many centuries the prosperity of the Church has augmented and declined with the rise and fall of the religious state. This does not mean that the religious state is essential to the Church, because though in one sense indispensable to her, it is, as a matter of fact, only a completion of the integrity of the Church. Everything either ordained by Christ, or necessary to secure the perfect observance of His commandments and counsels is, in a certain sense, indispensable to the Church. He has, however, so provided and governed circumstances in this case that the Church and the religious state keep pace, and increase and decline together. The times of decadence in the cloister have always been times of profound humiliation for the Church. The Orders are not the Church, but they are—as is proved by history—her strongest bulwark. Hence we can see what a glorious part the religious state plays in the hands of the Holy Ghost, for the good of the Church.¹

What a glorious kingdom of the Holy Ghost is the religious state! It is like an island of peace and calm in the middle of the fleeting, changing, restless

¹ This assertion received a startling confirmation in the Encyclical of Leo XIII., dated 22nd January, 1899, in condemnation of the so-called Americanism, the undisguised opinion of which, in reference to religious Orders, was that they were no longer suitable to our freedom-loving age, being more fitted for the weak than for the strong, and that they hindered Christian perfection and the common good rather than the contrary.

flood of this earthly life. It is like a garden planted by God and blessed with the fat of the land and the dew of heavenly consolation. It is like a lofty mountain where the last echoes of this world are still, and the first sounds of a blessed eternity are heard, where God Himself dwells, and prepares the children of men for intercourse with Him, and makes them ready to hear His voice. How beautiful were the laura of Nitria, the solitudes of Thebais, the cave of Subiaco! What peace, what happiness, purity and holiness have they shed over the face of the earth! These words of the Psalmist apply very fitly to the inhabitants of such favoured dwellings: "Blessed is he whom Thou hast chosen and taken to Thee: he shall dwell in Thy courts. He shall be filled with the good things of Thy house. . . . Thou hast visited the earth and hast plentifully watered it, Thou hast in many ways enriched it. The river of God is filled with water, Thou hast prepared their food. . . . Fill up plentifully the streams thereof . . . it shall spring up and rejoice in its showers. Thou shalt bless the crown of the year of Thy goodness . . . the beautiful places of the wilderness shall grow fat, and the hills shall be girded about with joy . . . they shall all shout, yea they shall sing a hymn." ¹

Yea, truly blessed is he who is called by the Holy Ghost into the paradise of the religious state! Never can he sufficiently thank the divine goodness! Where are the aspirations of a noble heart better realised and satisfied than in religion? Where can a man attain to his eternal end or work out his salvation with such security? Life in the world is full of uselessness, folly and danger, but in religion everything is according to reason, solid, directed to God and to eternity, and far removed from danger. There life is full of merit, and death is easy and edi-

¹ Ps. lxiv.

fyng. If a man desire—and where is he who does not desire it?—to work for the world and for the kingdom of heaven, where will he find such another opportunity?

We have seen of what service the Orders have always been to the Church of God, and to say that is to say everything. The religious state is not only excellent and safe, but is also most useful to the Church and the world. Let him, therefore, who has a vocation to the religious life thank the Holy Ghost unceasingly for so great a gift, and let him do all in his power to correspond worthily with it, by giving himself over to the guidance of the Holy Ghost generously, perseveringly and without reserve, so that he may become a fitting instrument of the Divine Spirit's love for men. Both the Church and the world owe Him thanks for a creation whence they have derived so much benefit at all times and under all trials.

CHAPTER XL.

CHRISTIAN MYSTICISM.

IT will now be fitting to say something about Christian mysticism, which is of the utmost importance to the Church, and has taken a great part in her life and activity. We will, therefore, consider: (1) what is to be understood by mysticism; (2) in what relation the Holy Ghost stands to it.

1. By mysticism there are to be understood certain extraordinary spiritual conditions and operations. Two regions or degrees must be distinguished in the spiritual life. The first consists in the possession of sanctifying grace, the infused virtues and Gifts of the Holy Ghost, and the use of them in an ordinary state of life for the performance of good works profitable for salvation with the help of ordinary graces. This is, without doubt, a supernatural life, still it is an ordinary state which agrees with the various vocations which exist in the Church, under ordinary circumstances and in ordinary situations. The second and superior region of the spiritual life comprises extraordinary knowledge and actions. Its privileges are connected with no particular state, but suppose peculiar graces. In it God draws nigh to man, works in him—yea, He works more than man does, and hence it is said that in the mystic state man receives and suffers more than he works, even though he never yields his responsibility and co-operation. Under these higher influences of God the faculties of man are raised to a condition of activity to which they could

not otherwise attain, and their operations become marvellous and divine. Mysticism, therefore, may be described as a state of extraordinary supernatural knowledge and activity on the part of those who are in a state of grace.

We must now consider some of the manifestations of this mystical life. The supernatural knowledge of mysticism usually goes by the name of contemplation. It consists essentially in this, that personal and mental operations—especially those that involve labour and fatigue—are shortened, facilitated and simplified by the influence of divine light. That which the soul endeavoured previously to acquire by dint of persevering prayer in the form of meditation is now seen by it in a moment, “in the twinkling of an eye,” without considerable reflection or reasoning. And whereas the soul was wont to search into many things, now it sees only one, though in that one thing it sees all others. While the understanding arrives thus swiftly at the possession of truth and rests in it, strength is also given to the will to do its work by awakening various affections in a manner corresponding with the occasion. Thus, contemplation is a vision of the truth which makes the soul glad and helps it. There are many degrees of contemplation, though they can be reduced to two classes—when the knowledge given is indistinct, and when it is quite clear; and both these classes of contemplation include many manifestations. To the first class there may be said to belong the prayer of recollection, quiet, silence, desire, union, ecstasy and rapture. To the class where a clearer knowledge is granted belong visions—whether given to the senses, imagination or understanding—and all interior revelations, including prophecy.

It is easy to conceive that under such extraordinary and divine influences the will should be inflamed and produce impetuous, deep and lasting affections, that

virtue should become more and more generous, and should develop into the heroic, and that, as a rule, extraordinary sanctity should be the result.

Often the body with its senses, powers, movements and actions shares in the transformation. We read in the lives of the saints of their wonderful perceptions in regard to the Holy Eucharist; of their seeing and hearing things that passed at an incalculable distance; of their being carried over abysses and waters; of their being raised in the air; of the marvellous agility and subtlety of their bodies. So also do we read of their wonderful endurance of fasts and austerities; of their abstinence for months together from any sort of food; of the heavenly perfume and light which surrounded them; of the remarkable transformation and appearance of their heart or bones; of their supernatural gifts of poetry, music, painting and preaching; of the impression on them of the instruments of the Passion and Sacred Wounds; of their wondrous sweats of blood, and, lastly, of the incorruption of their bodies. We read also of marvellous manifestations in their relics, such as movements, flowing of oil, liquefaction of blood and many other wonderful things. Such, in a few words, is Christian mysticism in its nature and manifestations. It is a world of supernatural and divine operations, and is, in combination with sanctifying grace and personal holiness, the most sublime state to which humanity can be raised here below.

2. Who but the Holy Ghost is the Principle of these glories? He is the Principle of all spiritual life, but especially of the Gifts and the so-called graces gratuitously given, the extraordinary manifestation of which is the domain of mysticism. St. Paul describes these manifestations of the Spirit,¹ and they were foretold even in the Old Testament, and, at the same time,

¹ 1 Cor. xii. sq.

explicitly attributed to the Holy Ghost: "And it shall come to pass after this," says the prophet Joel, "that I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy; your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Moreover upon My servants and handmaidens in those days I will pour forth My Spirit."¹ St. Peter, when speaking to the people on the Day of Pentecost, explained that the prophecy had been fulfilled that day by the descent of the Holy Ghost.² The same gracious Spirit who makes us children of God by His indwelling raises us by His further operations, from step to step, and from illumination to illumination, to a likeness to God, thus preparing here below that image of His glory into which we shall be transformed in heaven.³

We must now consider more closely the intention of the Holy Ghost in conferring this kind of extraordinary favours. His intention refers partly to its recipients, partly to the whole Church. As to the first, the Spirit desires to console and reward them for their virtues, merits and sacrifices in the service of God, and induce them to advance in sanctity. It is undeniable that such tokens of divine favour must act as a powerful motive to detach the soul from the world, and fill it with true humility and love of God. It is not possible but that one ray from Thabor should compensate for a thousand trials and sacrifices, and should incite the soul to desire trials and sufferings in order to obtain yet higher favours. In the second place the intention of the Holy Ghost is to prepare instruments for the carrying out of His designs with regard to the Church and the human race. As a matter of fact there are but very few great vocations in the Church that are not accompanied by some of the gifts of the higher form of Chris-

¹ Joel ii. 28.

² Acts ii. 17.

³ 2 Cor. iii. 18.

tian mysticism. Such is the nature of the case. Without a plenitude of divine light, without a constant and interior union with God, without the possession of extraordinary virtue, and without a great capacity for success and for attracting the confidence of men, nothing really great can be accomplished. All these conditions are to be found, as a rule, only in those higher degrees of prayer of which we are speaking.

Thus the Holy Ghost has ever in view both humanity and the Church, the guidance and government of which is His special work. Above all, by the miracles of mysticism He gives an incontrovertible proof of the divinity of the Church. Supernatural sanctity proved by wonders and favours is a distinctive mark of the one true Church. The manifestations of higher mysticism constitute miracles of the first order, and not only exist solely in the Catholic Church, but have always existed in her. Even as the Word made flesh possessed these wonderful powers and manifested them in thousands of miraculous ways, so also is His Mystical Body, the Church, favoured in like manner. Our Lord glorified the Church in earlier ages in the eyes of paganism by miracles and manifestations, so now, in later ages, does He glorify her in the eyes of unbelievers. Thus does He honour her; for she is not only His handmaid, but His spouse, to whom He gives Himself and all that He has.

Further, the Holy Ghost consoles the Church by these favours in the midst of the many tribulations of her pilgrimage. Special aid is promised to her in time of trouble.¹ Even as the Holy Ghost gave the ancient Church the comfort of the Scriptures,² and sent to it prophets to warn it of the coming judgments,³ so now does He raise up saints who aid the Catholic Church by their wonderful gifts. How many chastisements has not God spared the world on account of the

¹ Luke xii. 12.

² Rom. xv. 4.

³ Amos iii. 7.

penance and amendment which have followed the example and preaching of saints? Those times when, of old, God did not raise up prophets are designated in Scripture as days of the anger and visitation of God.¹

We must conclude, therefore, that not only must we entertain no doubt as to the existence of mysticism in the Church—because it is a matter of fact as much as is the existence of the Church herself—but that we must not, in any way, undervalue it. Mysticism is most closely connected with the very essence of the Church and flows from it. The Catholic Church is essentially supernatural, first, in her Founder, God Incarnate, then in the conditions of her existence, and, lastly, in her end. Mysticism is contained in embryo in the Gospel, and is made manifest in the saints. To undervalue or despise it would, therefore, be to despise the Church. We must also avoid a childish fear of mysticism and a shrinking from it. It belongs to the life of the Church, and our own state is essentially more wonderful and greater than mysticism. In sanctifying grace and in the Blessed Sacrament we possess what is more necessary and more sublime than all the miracles of mysticism put together. Nor may we desire to be led by extraordinary ways, because not only are they unnecessary, but are fraught with dangers and delusions; nor does there exist any way in which we could render ourselves capable of receiving them, for God alone gives them to whom He wills. The utmost we can do is to prepare ourselves remotely for the same by great purity of heart, by the mortification of our passions, by great zeal in labouring for the kingdom of God, by deep humility, and by a sincere desire not to be chosen as recipients of extraordinary gifts. The greatest prudence and precaution are necessary even in the judgment of such graces. Safety

¹ 1 Kings iii. 1; 3 Kings xviii. 22; Lam. ii. 9.

lies in a middle course, and those in whose hands judgment rests must be neither incredulous and pusillanimous, nor over-credulous and precipitate.

Finally, we must thank the Holy Ghost from our hearts, and recognise His gracious mercy to the Church and to men in these manifestations of Christian mysticism. As we have described it, apart from individual and definite cases, and as we find it in Scripture, it is undoubtedly the divine foundation on which our holy religion rests. We are built on the foundation of Apostles and prophets,¹ and miracles and prophecies are the irrefragable proofs of the divinity of the Church. Lastly, mysticism is the summit and zenith of the spiritual life here below ; and by it is brought home palpably to us the supernatural character of Christianity. Mysticism is what is nearest to heaven on this earth. Its summits are bathed in heavenly light, and from its heights it sheds streams of life which reach to the very depths of the earth. From it proceed illuminations, favours, consolations, extraordinary teaching and guidance both of individuals and of the whole people of God. In every age, says St. Thomas, God raises up prophets for the guidance of men.² All thanks and praise be to the Holy Ghost who is the Principle of this glorious creation!

¹ Heb. xii. 22.

² *Summa Theol.*, ii. 2, q. 174, a. 6, ad 3.

CHAPTER XLI.

THE SAINTS.

WHILE considering the many glories of the Holy Ghost we must, on no account, pass over the Saints. The reason for this will appear as we consider: (1) what a Saint is; and (2) in what manner he owes what he is to the Holy Ghost.

1. What is a Saint? Before proceeding with our answer it is necessary to point out that we do not here use the word "sanctity" in its narrower or absolute sense. Every Christian who lives and dies in a state of grace is essentially holy, or, in other words, a saint. The essence of holiness lies in sanctifying grace, and the possession of it is the Christian's title to heaven. In this meditation we shall use the word "sanctity" in its wider sense, in that, namely, in which it is customary to apply it to a Saint properly so-called. Taken thus, three conditions are necessary to constitute sanctity.

First, to be a Saint it is not sufficient to die in the state of grace, or to have led a blameless life in the practice of Christian virtues. A Saint must have brought his spiritual life to perfection, or must, in other words, have made a master-piece of it. Now, as we have already seen, the spiritual life consists in the possession and practice of virtues, and the perfection of virtue is called heroic virtue. What, then, are we to understand by heroic virtue? He possesses heroic virtue who practises Christian virtue in an extraordinary way, whether because the virtue is in itself

rare and difficult, or because it is practised under circumstances exceptionally unfavourable. Again, his virtue is heroic who practises it for a really supernatural end and with a supernatural intention, being influenced solely by motives of faith and charity un-mixed with natural motives. Again, that virtue is heroic which is practised with a special liberty of spirit, with facility and pleasure, without mental violence or painful effort. As in other spheres of activity, so in the spiritual life it is a sign of pre-eminence when great and difficult things are accomplished with ease and security. Finally, when virtue is practised with no thought of self and with no selfish motive, such as the possible gain of honour, enjoyment or riches, it is heroic; or if, on the contrary, it brings to us shame, injury, suffering or persecution, and has to be exercised at the cost of self-denial, it bears the stamp of true heroic virtue, and must be acknowledged and honoured as such. Furthermore, to be a Saint, not only one, but all the more important virtues, moral and theological, and all the virtues of one's state must be possessed in an heroic degree, and their holder must have died in the practice of them.

But even this is not enough to constitute the necessary qualifications for sanctity. No one is able to read the heart; and the virtues which resembled those of a Saint might have been such only in appearance. Therefore, before a Saint's virtues can be officially pronounced to be real and heroic an unequivocal testimony is required. God alone can give such testimony, for He alone searcheth the heart and reins, and Truth alone can testify to truth infallibly. God gives this testimony by the miracles which He works upon the intercession of the Saints, in confirmation of their sanctity. But as a testimony even the miracles worked by a Saint in the course of his earthly life are inadequate, for who knows but what he may have

forfeited the state of grace at the eleventh hour and died in sin? Therefore, the further testimony is required of miracles worked by his intercession after his death, for thus alone can it be proved that he departed this life a Saint and in the friendship of God.

But, then, there are such things as apparent miracles, and, consequently, the nature of those performed by the Saint must be placed beyond doubt. The examination into this is made at the ecclesiastical process of canonisation or beatification. The Church's decision is preceded by a searching judicial examination of the virtues and miracles of the Saint, and this sometimes lasts for years. It is quite exhaustive and leaves nothing to be desired on the score of the authenticity of the subject of the inquiry. It is after this process that the Church gives her official decision to the effect that the virtues of the servant of God were really of an heroic degree, that the miracles are authentic, and that, therefore, the Saint can be venerated and invoked as a servant of God, and can be raised to the altars. Then only is the Saint held up to the veneration of all on earth.

This is what we understand by a Saint. He is a Christian in whom are revealed all the greatness, beauty and glory of the supernatural life and evangelical perfection; one in whom God's grace has gained a particularly conspicuous victory; in whom the virtues have blossomed and borne glorious fruit; and in whom the gratuitous graces have had their full effect and have manifested all their heavenly qualities. A Saint shows what God's power and the co-operation of man's will are capable of. He is in the supernatural life what in the natural life is called a genius or a hero. He is a wonderfully great being, in the fullest sense of the word. Where can we find one greater, or one who does more for the glory of God or the salvation of the world?

2. A Saint is, indeed, a glorious and sublime being ; but who makes him so? The Holy Ghost. To Him he owes everything. If the ordinary spiritual life is a creation of the Holy Ghost, how much more so the life of a Saint in whom the fulness and magnificence of grace dwell? In a Saint the operations of the Holy Ghost are manifested in a most remarkable manner. It is the Holy Ghost who, by the inscrutable mystery of predilection, chose him from his mother's womb and destined him for this glorious lot. He it is who first made him a child of God by sanctifying grace, who watered and increased this grace by His illuminations and inspirations, who guarded it from loss and restored it to the soul for ever if it were unhappy enough at any time to forfeit it. How wonderful is the Holy Ghost in the training and guidance of His Saints! He inundates them even in their youth with a wondrous light and with treasures of supernatural knowledge ; He infuses into their souls a rare nobility, docility, constant self-restraint and courage ; He communicates strength and fervour to their will, and overcomes its resistance with a sweet and persistent power, until nature with all its faculties and impulses is entirely subject to grace. Moreover, He prepares the way for their vocation either in the Church or in society, and fashions them into efficacious instruments of His designs for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. He lavishes the treasures of His grace upon these children of His predilection ; and even here on earth crowns them with an aureola of glory in that He adorns them richly with the so-called gratuitous graces. There are but few among the Saints whose heroic virtues have not been confirmed by miracles and mystic manifestations. The Holy Ghost follows His Saints to the end, and, having led them on from virtue to virtue, crowns their earthly life by a blessed death.

Even then He has not finished with His work for His Saints. That the world may know how high they stand in His favour, He allows a reflection of their state of glory to fall on their name and relics, and shows their power by the miracles which are wrought by their intercession. All of these supernatural manifestations are the work of the Holy Ghost. Sometimes their sacred remains are used by Him as the vehicles and instruments of His omnipotence; at other times the voice of their supplication reaches Him in heaven and He works the miracles at their simple request. And in what profusion does He not work these miracles! Even as in the beginning He decked the firmament with stars, so now does He deck the Church with the marvels He works to honour His Saints.

In order that He may place His seal on the glory of His servants the Holy Ghost moves the Church to pronounce their beatification or solemn canonisation. This is all the work of the Holy Ghost. From Him comes that sudden, inexplicable and impulsive movement among the faithful to venerate some Saint or other, which often is the remote cause of the determination of the Church to raise him to the altars. From Him likewise proceeds the solemn judgment of the Church which pronounces officially upon the virtues and merits of the Saint. The judicial decision that his virtues and miracles are authentic, and that he is worthy of public veneration is, according to theologians, an infallible utterance of the Pope, because in declaring the religious principles, life and morals of a Saint to be in accordance with the Gospel, and in affirming that God has worked miracles in confirmation of this, or, again, in prescribing the veneration of the Saint throughout the whole world, he cannot err. Hence it

is the Holy Ghost who moves the Pope to pronounce this judgment, and guides him in his action.

An act of canonisation is most grand and solemn. Let us picture it to ourselves. The long delay of exhaustive examinations and wearisome transactions, which sometimes fill centuries, are over, all obstacles are removed, and at last the picture of the Saint hangs in St. Peter's, and he himself is about to receive the highest honour that can be paid to mortal man. The great church of the world is transformed by art and decoration into an outer court of heaven, and is filled by crowds of the faithful listening and praying. In the sanctuary there are assembled representatives of the whole hierarchy of the visible Church clad in their gorgeous robes. At length the Pope ascends the throne, and, in the name of the whole Church, implores the Holy Ghost for light and inspiration. Then, standing up, he proclaims solemnly that this child of the Catholic Church, who was once a sojourner and pilgrim on this earth, is now a Saint in heaven and a servant and friend of God, and will thenceforward have his place on the altars of the Church, and may, nay must, receive the veneration of the faithful. The veil, which has hitherto covered the picture of the Saint, is now torn aside, and he appears, crowned with glory and ready to receive the first tokens of the veneration of his holy Mother the Church and of all his brethren upon earth. The Vicar of Christ, the head of the Church, throwing himself on his knees with all present, is the first to offer him solemn homage and invoke him. The news of the proclamation spreads rapidly to the ends of Christendom, to echo and re-echo in the hearts of millions of souls now and in all future ages.

We might almost exclaim that such honour passes all honour, and is too much for any son of man; and he who is the witness of the ceremony can scarcely

resist—even if it is to be resisted—a feeling of anxiety lest the homage should, indeed, be too great, and lest God should be deprived of some of the honour due to Him. But lo, at the moment when the veil is torn from the effigy, and shouts of love and devotion burst from the throats of the kneeling crowd, and the prayers of the Church are offered to this son of man, the great voice of the organ tones forth the *Te Deum*—We praise Thee O God—and proclaims that it is to the Triune God that the honour is really paid, and that it is He alone who leads to sanctity and is glorified in His Saints!

The canonisation is over, but not so the glories of the Saint. They have but just begun, and will be perpetuated through all ages by the supplications and veneration of the Church Militant and by his response from heaven and by thousands of tokens of his benevolence towards the Church and power to help her.

What conclusions should we draw from all this? The first thing is to acquire a greater knowledge of the goodness and fidelity of the Holy Ghost towards the children of men. He never forsakes those who love Him, and in all that He asks of us He has only our happiness in view. This is in truth all that He desires! He shows us almost palpably what glorious things He prepares for His Saints. It cost that child of man whose canonisation we have beheld very much to become a Saint, but behold his great reward! "To him that shall overcome," says our Lord, "I will give to sit with Me on My throne,"¹ or, as we may say, on the altars of the Church. What can be compared with such a reward or with such happiness? "Thy friends, O God, are made exceeding honourable, their principality is exceeding strengthened."² And great is the number of those whom the Holy Ghost has chosen for this happiness. Every age, every

¹ Apoc. iii. 21.

² Ps. cxxxviii. 17.

country has its Saints ; no one who has the will is excluded.

Let us then resolve to strive after sanctity with all our hearts, and try to be Saints, even though we may never be canonised. Would not such an end be in the interests of all? Who serves and glorifies God better than a Saint? Who can do more for the salvation of the world than a Saint? The shrines, the altars, the relics of the Saints are perennial sources of blessing for all the human race. Everything connected with them, their lives, their example, their intercession, their sacred remains, call down the benedictions of the Holy Ghost. It is related of St. Francis of Sales that, when present at the canonisation of St. Francis Xavier, being carried away by holy enthusiasm he there and then determined to be a Saint. "This is the third Francis to be raised to the altars of the Church," he exclaimed ; "I will be the fourth!" He kept his word, for the Holy Ghost helped and crowned his resolution ; and he became a canonised Saint. A similar resolution on our part would, at any rate, have the advantage of making us strive earnestly after perfection, and would shield us from the danger of leading a lukewarm and useless life, and we should at least become zealous priests, fervent religious or valiant Christians, according to our vocation. Would not that be a priceless advantage worth any effort?

CHAPTER XLII.

CONSUMMATION.

THE Holy Ghost directs and perfects all things, and through the Church leads mankind to its end and consummation. There are three degrees in this consummation: (1) the resurrection; (2) the judgment; (3) heaven. Let us now consider the relation of the Holy Ghost to these three.

1. The resurrection of the body and of all nature is a mystery of faith as true as it is sublime. It is the magnificent conclusion of this earthly life and the glorious beginning of the eternal kingdom. Faith teaches us that our body, separated from the soul by death, will not remain for ever in the earth as dust, but will be at last redeemed from death and will live for ever united to the glorified soul. This was the belief of the Synagogue, and the prospect of this future restoration and new birth inspired the Saints of the Old Testament with a strength which consoled them for all the losses, troubles and sufferings of their earthly life.¹ Our Lord, far from dispelling this conviction, confirmed and enforced it,² and finally put the seal on it by His own resurrection, one of the objects of which was to give us an indubitable proof and earnest of our own resurrection.

All men, the just and the unjust, will be included in the resurrection, for all equally have sown in the

¹ Job xix. 26; 2 Macc. vii. 9 *sq.*; Heb. xi. 35.

² John v. 29; Matt. xxiv. 31.

body the seed either of eternal life or eternal loss. "We shall all indeed rise again, but we shall not all be changed,"¹ says St. Paul. In this passage the Apostle not only affirms the truth of our future resurrection, but instructs us as to the manner of its accomplishment, namely, "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet". It will be the work of God's omnipotence, the supreme victory of Jesus Christ over the remnants of sin, death and corruption, a glorious victory which will restore all things and lay them at the feet of the Father. The body will receive, as it were, a new birth, and without ceasing to be a body will receive wonderful spiritual properties.² We have at present no conception of the wonders of the resurrection of the body, by which it will become the worthy companion of the soul and its perfect instrument. Not only will it be of no hindrance to it, and even an assistance to it, but it will be in itself a source of manifold joys, sweetness and honour. Thanks to its glorious properties of impassibility, light, subtlety and agility it will endow the soul with new honour, liberty and joy. What a glorious awakening will that be! The bodies of the blessed, borne up by the glorified souls, will shine like stars and suns. In that glorious procession, where one blessed form will surpass the other in beauty, brilliancy and majesty, they will rise, and, accompanied by the Angels, go forth to meet our Lord. Blessed, thrice blessed those who will take part in that pageant!

And to whom shall we owe the joy of this happy resurrection? First, to our Divine Lord, whose Sacred Humanity will be the means of our resurrection, whether it be by calling us with a loud voice like that with which of old He called Lazarus, or whether by His mere presence which will wake us from death. It

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 51.

² 1 Cor. xv. 15; 1 Thess. iv. 12 sq.

is written: "All that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God,"¹ and again: "The Lord Himself shall come down from heaven with commandment, and with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead shall rise".² Nevertheless, the Holy Ghost is not without His share in the resurrection. As in the beginning He, of His love, fashioned the body of man, and breathed into it the breath of life, even as He now honours and singles out the body of man to be His temple, sanctifies it by the sacraments, and makes of it the instrument of His grace, so at the end will He lay His hand on it and glorify it. Scripture ascribes to the Holy Ghost an especial part in the glorifying of the body. The prophet Ezechiel makes use of the fact that our bodies will one day be quickened and rise again as an image and pledge of the future reunion of the tribes of Israel. In the vision it is the Spirit of God who wakes the dead bones to life.³ St. Paul also says: "And if the Spirit of Him who raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Jesus Christ from the dead shall quicken also your mortal bodies, because of His Spirit that dwelleth in you".⁴ The indwelling of the Holy Ghost in us is, therefore, a peculiar pledge of our resurrection. Moreover, the resurrection of the body and its reunion with the glorified soul is the culmination of the development of human existence and its perfection; and as the Holy Ghost is the Principle of perfection and the Giver of all life, in the fullest sense of the word, it is but fitting that this glorious resurrection should be ascribed to Him.

It is not only we who will, by the power of the Holy Ghost, rise again, but with us and on account of us the whole of creation will be renewed; for, according to St. Paul, it groans and travails in pain on account of

¹ John v. 28.

³ Ezech. xxxvii. 14.

² 1 Thess. iv. 15.

⁴ Rom. viii. 11.

sin, waiting in expectation for the revelation of the sons of God with us who have the first-fruits of the Spirit.¹ The Spirit, who in the beginning moved over the waters, fertilised the elements, established them in order, variety and beauty, will some day liberate creation from the curse of sin and turn it into a garden of delight.² The Psalmist says: "But if Thou turnest away Thy face they shall be troubled; then shalt Thou take away Thy Spirit and they shall fail, and shall return to their dust. Thou shalt send forth Thy Spirit and they shall be created and Thou shalt renew the face of the earth."³ There will be a new heaven and a new earth.⁴ And risen man, a wondrous being clothed with new properties of strength and liberty, glorious in his never-failing youth and beauty, will be the image of the Holy Ghost! He it is who will give him the kiss of immortality, weave the garments of his splendour, and stamp him with the impress of His own glory in the spiritual properties of the glorified body, which are the dowry of eternal beatitude.

2. The judgment follows the resurrection. It too will be general, because man is not an isolated individual, but is responsible to the world and the Church as a member of society, whether that of family, State or humanity at large. Nations must be judged as nations, and the ways of divine Providence must be justified in the eyes of all mankind. It is, moreover, necessary that the Incarnate God should be manifested to all men as their Head, Judge and King. This is the real reason of the universal judgment; and this is why the sentence pronounced by the Judge will be based explicitly on the merits and demerits of each individual in respect to his fellow-men.⁵

What part will the Holy Ghost take in the general judgment? First, it is He who, during this life, pre-

¹ Rom. viii. 1 *sqq.*

² 2 Peter iii. 13.

³ Ps. ciii. 30.

⁴ Isa. lxvi. 22; Apoc. xxi. 1.

⁵ Matt. xxv. 34-46.

parens both judgment and sentence. He is the Principle of all the graces which are bestowed on mankind by the medium of the Church's threefold office. He is the Dispenser of all interior graces and good impulses. The grace of salvation is held out to all men by the action, whether exterior or interior, of the Holy Ghost, and it is the good use or abuse of these graces upon which will depend the sentence of salvation or condemnation. The sentence is rendered irrevocable by the free-will of man and by the measure of grace accorded by the Holy Ghost; and this measure is full at the moment of death, and no further grace can follow. In this way it is that the Holy Ghost separates the spirits. Our Lord shows us this silent and all-important action of the Holy Ghost when He says: "When He (the Paraclete) is come He will convince the world of sin, and of justice and of judgment";¹ "And this is the judgment, because the light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, for their works are evil".² Even as the Holy Ghost searches the depths of the Godhead, so does He search the secrets of the consciences of men, and knows both the graces which have been given to them and the use they have made thereof. We read these words in the Book of Wisdom: "For the Spirit of wisdom is benevolent, and will not acquit the evil speaker from his lips: for God is witness of his reins, and He is a true searcher of his heart, and a hearer of his tongue. For the Spirit of the Lord hath filled the whole world: and that which containeth all things hath knowledge of the voice. Therefore, he that speaketh unjust things cannot be hid, neither shall the chastising judgment pass him by."³ In fact, the manifestation of consciences at the judgment will be nothing else than the revelation of the freely approved acts which every

¹ John xvi. 8.² John iii. 19.³ Wisd. i. 6-8.

man has, as it were, written in his own heart, and which the Holy Ghost has stamped and laid up against the Day of Judgment. In a moment, by the operation of the power of God, the consciences of all men will be laid bare, and the ways of God and of men, the relations of individual nations and States to each other, to the Church and to God will be seen as in a brilliant picture. There, as in a tableau, will be displayed the city of God and the city of Satan, the one all light and the other all darkness, and the history of the world and the Church seen in the light of the grace and power of the Blessed Trinity. Such is the testimony which the Holy Ghost will bear at the Day of Judgment!

He also takes part in carrying out the sentence. Properly speaking it is to our Lord, God made Man, to whom judgment belongs. He says Himself: "Neither doth the Father judge any man, but hath given all judgment to the Son,¹ . . . because He is the Son of man".² Nevertheless, in a certain sense the judgment also belongs to the Holy Ghost. For a judicial sentence three things are necessary: judicial authority, wisdom and zeal for justice;³ and by virtue of this division the judgment can be attributed individually to the Three Divine Persons. As an act of power and authority it belongs to the Father, who proceeds from none and represents all power—so much so that so far as the Son proceeds from the Father it can be said that He is sent by Him. As an act of wisdom, by which everything is judged and ruled in accordance with right and truth, the judgment is to be attributed to the Son, who is Divine Wisdom. As an act of love and zeal for justice it is to be attributed to the Holy Ghost. Scripture lays great stress on the zeal for justice which will characterise the Judge of all the world. It describes Him under the figures of

¹ John v. 22.

² John v. 27.

³ *Summa Theol.*, iii., q. 59, a. 1.

a fire, a storm, a rod and a two-edged sword. "If," says the prophet Isaias, "the Lord shall wash away the filth of the daughters of Sion, and shall wash away the blood of Jerusalem out of the midst thereof, by the spirit of judgment and by the spirit of burning";¹ "He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He shall stay the wicked";² "I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called faithful and true; and with justice doth he judge and fight. His eyes were as a flame of fire . . . and out of his mouth proceeded a sharp two-edged sword, that with it he may strike the nations;"³ "A mighty wind shall stand up against them, and as a whirlwind shall it divide them."⁴ Scripture points out no less the mercy and goodness of the Judge and His benevolence in rewarding the just: "But he shall judge the poor with justice, and shall reprove with equity for the meek of the earth".⁵ From the part to be taken by the Holy Ghost in the judgment the Fathers of the Church draw arguments in favour of His divinity, and, indeed, the mission of the Holy Ghost is repeatedly mentioned in Scripture in conjunction with the Last Judgment.⁶ In a certain sense, therefore, our Lord, God made Man, judges in the Holy Ghost. This love and zeal, so terrible in its chastisement of the wicked, so gracious and full of reward for the just, will be the final revelation of the Holy Ghost in this world, and the supreme proof of His essential love of justice. It is a ray reflected from heaven, but it is also a proof of His hatred of evil and is the beginning of hell. Hell is so terrible, because it is the reaction of love and the vengeance of the Holy Ghost for the contempt that

¹ Isa. iv. 4.² Isa. xi. 4.³ Apoc. xix. 11, 15.⁴ Wisd. v. 24.⁵ Isa. xi. 4.⁶ Joel ii. 28-31; cf. Schell, *Wirkungen des dreieinigen Gottes (Effects of the Triune God)*, chap. viii., art. 5, n. 1.

has been shown for His love and for the mercy of God.

3. Let us now endeavour to contemplate heaven and the life of the blessed. Accidentally the happiness of the just proceeds from the delights of their abode, from the society of their brethren, from their sensible enjoyment and from the light of their natural knowledge; but it consists essentially in their union with God. In heaven this union will not be partial but complete, not a desire or aspiration but a reality. Nothing will be able to force itself between God and us, our faculties will be immediately united to Him, will adhere to Him, and, so to speak, be merged in Him. This will take place by a new miracle of His power and goodness. Even as here below He gives us a new nature by means of sanctifying grace, in order thereby to communicate Himself to us supernaturally and make us partakers of His nature, and as He infuses into our souls new powers and gifts, and quickens and enables us to lead a divine life by actual grace, so in heaven will He impart to us new powers and new properties which will enable us to unite ourselves more closely to Him, to know, love and taste Him, and be, in a word, happy even as He is happy. This new faculty comprises the so-called light of glory and the love which accompanies it.

The light of glory is, therefore, quite a new supernatural power or faculty, which raises and strengthens our understanding and makes us capable of enjoying the immediate vision of God, of gazing on Him face to face. This would otherwise be impossible to any created understanding, even to that of an angel in possession of the supernatural life, because no creature can see God as He is unless special power be communicated to him. By the light of glory we see God as He is in heaven, not as we conceive Him to be by His works or by what we have been told about

Him. Our ideas of God here below are, to a large extent, drawn from the perfection of created beings which are only imperfect copies of Him, and, as it were, the footprints of His glory and majesty. But in heaven we shall see Him face to face and behold the nature and attributes of the Triune God. He will be closer to us than anything we can know of. In fact, our union with Him will be the closest conceivable, short of union of nature and essence. The light of glory is, moreover, accompanied by a corresponding capacity for loving God, rejoicing in Him and finding our happiness in Him. Whereas the light of glory differs essentially from the light of faith, the love wherewith we love God here and that with which we shall love Him in heaven are essentially the same, though the last is far deeper, stronger and more blessed. Thus the beatified soul is entirely and immediately united to God, its supreme and infinite good and end; it is united to Him with all its powers, all its faculties, thoughts and affections; it adheres to Him with most happy love, and lives and rests in Him; its heart beats, as it were, in unison with His, and in Him it possesses and enjoys all things. He is its all through eternity. Such is the happiness of heaven as far as we can form any idea of it.

Now what part does the Holy Ghost take in our beatitude? This, as we have just seen, consists in the closest union with God, in the immediate vision and knowledge of Him, and in the love caused by it. Therefore, beatitude consists, above all, in knowledge, as our Lord Himself tells us when He says: "This is eternal life that they may know Thee".¹ By this knowledge there is effected a perfect likeness to our Lord, who proceeds from the Father by knowledge, and is, therefore, called the Image and Word of the

¹ John xvii. 3.

Father. This likeness to the Son is the foundation of a second and further likeness to the Holy Ghost, in the same manner that the procession of the Son from the Father is the condition of the procession of the Holy Ghost from the Father and the Son. Thus, in the state of beatitude we are made like unto the Three Divine Persons in a most complete manner. This is the final and most perfect communication of the Divine Persons to us: the Son communicates Himself to us by immediate vision and the Holy Ghost by beatific love.

This is the peculiar and essential part that the Holy Ghost takes in our beatitude. By beatific love He gives Himself—not only His Gifts, but Himself—to us in a perfect way. The Blessed Trinity is revealed to the blessed by immediate vision, and they see the countenance of the Holy Ghost aflame with love and joy; they see how the Father and Son love each other in the Holy Ghost, in an eternal and blessed embrace; and by this revelation and communication they are drawn into filial union with Them, and realise in their hearts the mystery of divine beatitude. Charity which was infused into their hearts here below is no longer slow and dull, but burns brightly and mingles its flames with the fire of the Godhead. This revelation of the Holy Ghost and the possession He takes of us by the immediate communication of His life is a part of beatitude. He is the Author and Finisher of all God's communications to His creatures; therefore in Him will our beatitude find its consummation.

Oh, what a wondrous part is His in our everlasting happiness! What an indescribable wealth will He not add to our celestial dowry! What would the vision of God be without beatific love and joy? We may as well ask what a brilliant sun would be without its fertilising heat, or what a flower would be without its scent or fruit: they would be nothing but beauty without joy.

It is, therefore, the Holy Ghost who makes heaven really heaven to us by His communication to us of Himself, His love and His joy. Even as the light of glory breaks down the narrow limits of our knowledge and enables it to comprehend all mysteries, so also will beatific love enlarge our hearts, increase their capacity for love and cause new and mighty sources of joy to well up within them. What fulness of love and joy are we not capable of even here below? How sweetly, how blessedly does not the Holy Ghost reveal Himself to us in seasons of consolation? If He is this to us now, what will He not be in heaven? There all will be love and joy; and every blessed spirit will be a source of blessing; each attribute of God is as a stream of delight which pours itself into the ocean of all love and joy, even the Holy Ghost, who is there given to us in all His fulness. Rivers and floods of joy will inundate us, carrying us along with mighty force into the infinite beatitude of God Himself. Our life will be joy, and this joy is the Holy Ghost. The blessed will bear in them the image of the Holy Ghost, because all in them is joy, holiness and beatitude. May we not compare heaven to an immeasurable rainbow, and the blessed to its many reflections, the Holy Ghost being the Author of its beauty? In a rainbow here below it is the sun which is the cause of its manifold reflections and appearance. Each drop of rain receives a ray of the sun's splendour, reflects what it receives, and thus makes the whole thing beautiful. So is it with the blessed in heaven. Each saint is like a drop which reflects a ray of eternal light; and the Sun which illuminates every part, communicates to each its beauty and brilliancy and causes His divine image to be everywhere reflected, is the Holy Ghost, the Principle of all holiness, the Guide, Teacher and Perfecter of all the saints. Thus heaven is the last and supreme communication and revelation of the Holy Ghost, the outflow of His joy and delight.

By Him will our likeness to the Father and Son be perfected, because we shall love Them as They love Themselves, namely, in the Holy Ghost and in the possession of His eternal love. It was this thought which made the early Christians engrave these words on their tombstones: *Vivas in Spiritu Sancto*—Live in the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost is the everlasting rest of our hearts, even as the Son is the everlasting light of our understanding.

Who can conceive the love, praise and thanksgiving which the blessed will offer to the Holy Ghost? There in heaven they will at last understand how worthy of love He is, in Himself and in the love He shows us. There they will behold His countenance, and know that all good things come from Him; that He it was who chose them and planted them in the garden of the Church, who poured grace into their hearts, inundated them with favours, cultivated them, made them capable of bearing fruit for everlasting life, and, finally, transplanted them into the garden of heaven, where He floods them with the light and heat of His love and beatitude, so that they may bloom and flourish for ever. The saints are the flowers of the Holy Ghost. Even as water, says St. Cyril of Jerusalem, is contained in everything and gives life and fecundity to everything, even as it is to be found in the purple of the grape, the red of the rose and the white of the lily, so is the Holy Ghost in everything, in the purity of virgins, in the fortitude of martyrs, in the wisdom of confessors.¹ If heaven may be likened to a flower, then the Holy Ghost is its creator and its life. Oh, may we some day shine like a petal of this mystical rose, as an ornament, however small, in that mystical crown, to the honour and joy of the Holy Ghost! May the grace of the Holy Ghost accomplish this in us!

¹ St. Cyril. Hieros., *Catech.*, xvi., *de Spir. S.*, 1.

CHAPTER XLIII.

WORSHIP OF THE HOLY GHOST.

WE are now approaching the end of our meditations on the Holy Ghost. In the course of them we have considered His nature, His life in the bosom of the Godhead and His exterior operations in creation. Consequent on these considerations we must regard Him as the object of our worship, and this will be the subject of the remaining meditations.

The worship which is due to the Holy Ghost is twofold: negative and positive. First, we must carefully guard against dishonouring Him; and, secondly, we must actually and actively worship Him; and this positive worship embraces all the various devotions which we can practise in His honour. St. Paul sums up in a few words the nature of the offences which we can commit against the Holy Ghost. "Extinguish not the Spirit," he says in one place;¹ and in another:² "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption". Thus the Apostle warns us against two kinds of offence: (1) we are not to extinguish the Spirit; and (2) we are not to grieve Him. How can we do either of these things? In a word, we extinguish the Holy Ghost in us by mortal sin; and we grieve Him by venial sin.

1. It must be admitted that when St. Paul uses the word extinguish in the passage quoted first he is not alluding directly to mortal sin, but to the suppres-

¹ 1 Thess. v. 19.

² Eph. iv. 30.

sion of the gratuitous Gifts of the Spirit by inconsiderate disapproval. Therefore the extinction which He mentions applies more to the operations of the Holy Ghost than to His presence within us. Nevertheless there is a way by which we can extinguish His presence—which is the principle of all His operations in us—and this method is commission of mortal sin.

Mortal sin, looked at as an act, is a deliberate transgression of one of the grave precepts of God, which completely turns us from Him as our last end; because sinful man knows full well that on that transgression depend the loss of sanctifying grace and exclusion from everlasting happiness. We turn from God when we attach ourselves to some created thing, by doing which we transgress the commandment of God. Looked at as a state, mortal sin is a separation from God by the culpable loss of sanctifying grace, together with all the deplorable consequences of such separation. From all these points of view mortal sin involves a resistance of the Holy Ghost and an offence against Him. He is the Lord, Guide and Teacher of the sanctified soul, He writes the commandments of God on the "fleshy tables of the heart," and the commandments themselves are an expression of His majesty. But by sin we reject the sweet yoke of the Holy Ghost, we shut our hearts to His inspirations and admonitions, act in despite of Him, and break the law engraven on our hearts. Moreover, He is holiness, pure love, goodness and fidelity; and sin—being a criminal love for creatures, inconstancy and infidelity—is in direct contrast with his personal attributes. Sin is a repudiation of Him, a separation from Him, and, though not always expressed, a fundamental hatred of Him. It is always an outrage against the love and friendship which we owe God, and if death surprise us in a state of sin we can never attain to Him as our last end. The repudiation of God on the part of man

is followed by God's repudiation of man and by His withdrawal of sanctifying grace. In all this there lies, in a certain sense, a personal offence against the Holy Ghost. We have already considered how, by sanctifying grace, He makes the hearts of Christians to be His peculiar temples. By committing mortal sin we compel God to withdraw sanctifying grace, or rather we ourselves drive it away. With it we drive the Holy Ghost from His sanctuary, for there can be no question of His dwelling in a heart defiled and devastated by sin. Therefore He withdraws, taking with Him all the supernatural gifts and privileges with which He had enriched the soul. The soul is left in a state of desolation, abandonment and ruin—a state as fatal to itself as it is dishonouring to the Holy Ghost. It placed no value on His gifts, love or personal presence, and cast them away as if they were worth nothing.

All this is effected by one mortal sin. It is an injury to the Holy Ghost, and is His extinction in the soul of the sinner. This applies in a peculiar manner to those sins which are called sins against the Holy Ghost, because they are in a special way contrary to His personal attributes and operations. They are as follows: presumption, resistance to known supernatural truth, obstinacy in sin and final impenitence, despair of God's mercy and envy of another's spiritual good. All these are in a peculiar manner antagonistic to the Holy Ghost. He is the Spirit of hope;¹ and despair of His mercy and a proud, presumptuous self-confidence are equally offensive to Him. He is the Spirit of truth,² of prophecy,³ of miracles⁴ and of everything else which bears testimony to supernatural truth; whereas obstinacy and obduracy would do their best to make Him a God of lies and deceit. He is the Spirit of love towards men, and hence desires their

¹ Rom. xv. 13.⁵

² John xiv. 17.

³ Apoc. xix. 10.

⁴ Exod. viii. 19.

happiness ; He is the Spirit of mercy and forgiveness ; and obstinacy in sin not only makes all His efforts useless, but turns them into means of condemnation. They are rightly called sins against the Holy Ghost, and are among the most grievous sins which man can commit. According to St. Thomas¹ they are, in the most proper sense, sins of malice, because they are committed with intention and reflection, and are directed against all that is most holy and most touching in our religion. Therefore our Blessed Lord says that blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven, neither in this world nor in the world to come,² partly because of its impossibility, as in the case of final impenitence, partly because of its difficulty, as in the case of the others, which suppose an abyss of malice destructive of all those things which might have a moving effect upon the sinner and turn him from sin. Obviously the conversion of the sinner from a state of sin such as this does either not take place or is brought about with great difficulty. These sins drive from a man's heart even the last remnants of the supernatural life, such as faith and hope.

In this manner, therefore, can we extinguish the Holy Ghost in our hearts, and to do so is the greatest outrage which we can offer Him. Any one who wishes to worship Him must avoid mortal sin for love of Him, because of the terrible insult and injury against Him which it involves ; for the offence is not committed against Him by His servant, but by His child, by one whom He has cherished and admitted to the closest intimacy. His child has driven Him away from his heart with scorn, and His temple has been turned into an abode of idols and devils. "Whosoever committeth sin is a servant of sin," says our Lord.³ In

¹ *Summa Theol.*, ii., 2, q. 14, a. 2.

² Matt. xii. 32.

³ John viii. 34, 44.

this sense the injury to the Holy Ghost contained in mortal sin may be called a personal injury to Him.

A second reason for avoiding mortal sin is the great injury it causes to ourselves. If we abuse and alienate God's love and goodness, on what can we build our hopes? What is there left to move and convert us? Obduracy, obstinacy and final impenitence are the obvious consequence of years spent in a state of sin, in resistance to grace and rejection of the inspirations of the Holy Ghost. Nothing is more terrible to man than the vengeance taken by the goodness and mercy of God. We find instances in history of the awful manner in which God has punished not only individuals, but whole nations for their sins against the Holy Ghost. The Jews are the most striking instance. To them did St. Stephen utter this reproach: "You always resist the Holy Ghost".¹ Moses² and the prophets³ reprov'd them for the same sin, and the measure of their guilt was filled up when they hardened their hearts against the preaching and miracles of our Blessed Lord and His Apostles, and rejected the supreme proof of the Holy Ghost's love. Then God gave them over to their blind delusion and to their hopes of an earthly Messiah. They defied the Romans, who came and conquered, beat down their city, burned the Temple and scattered the people over the face of the earth. Judaism was destroyed in the midst of blood, flames and ruins. A like punishment overtook the Eastern Empire. The wantonness and false philosophy of the Greeks and the overweening ambition of emperors and patriarchs had for centuries made Constantinople the theatre of the most scandalous ecclesiastical disputes; and heresies, even against the Person of the Holy Ghost, had been allowed to prevail, till at last the East separated itself from the Mother Church of

¹ Acts vii. 51.

² Deut. ix. 13; Exod. xxxiii. 3.

³ Isa. xlvi. 4.

Rome. All efforts of Popes and Councils had failed to remedy the evil. At last, on Whit Monday, 1433, the unfortunate empire succumbed to the sword of the Turk; Constantinople was taken and became thenceforth the capital of the Crescent, and the Greek Empire disappeared from among nations. Thus terrible can be the chastisements of the Holy Ghost. Therefore, once more we repeat that the first and most important step in devotion to Him is to keep from mortal sin for love of Him.

2. St. Paul further warns us not to grieve the Holy Ghost, which, as we said, is what we do when we commit venial sin. Venial sin is by its nature the transgression of a divine commandment not in itself grave, or else the transgression of one that is grave, without our entire knowledge and consent. Venial sin, unlike mortal sin, does not involve turning away from our last end, and is, therefore, not punished with the eternal loss of God, but only by a temporary deferring of eternal happiness. It is, however, to be observed that there is a marked difference between deliberate venial sins committed with our knowledge against the dictates of conscience, and those into which we fall inadvertently or by weakness. The last do not destroy our filial intercourse with the Holy Ghost, whereas the others do. It is of these that we say that they grieve the Holy Ghost, and we should do our utmost to avoid them.

The motives for this are not difficult to find. A deliberate or voluntary venial sin is an act somehow in opposition to the Holy Ghost. He has taken possession of our hearts, and dwells in them in order that He may lead us to perfection and everlasting life; and by venial sin we oppose His will and intention. It may be well to remark that in speaking of God's will in this way we do not wish it to be understood that God is not in earnest when forbidding venial sin, or

that the fulfilment of His will is of no moment to Him, and that He leaves us free to follow it or not. This is by no means the case. As often as we commit a wilful venial sin we transgress a true binding precept, even though it be not grave; consequently such a sin is an act of real disobedience to the known will of God. He says: "Do this," and we do it not; He says: "I forbid you to do this," and we insist on doing it. It is easy to see from this that venial sin is, at any rate, a partial contempt of the divine sovereignty, and is, therefore, so great an evil that we may not commit one slightest venial sin even in order to gain the greatest good or escape the greatest evil. For instance, were the destruction of all creation involved, we may not save it by telling one deliberate lie. Could such an evil as venial sin fail to be displeasing to the Holy Ghost?

Furthermore, venial sin is a transgression against the love of God. God loves us, and proves it not only in necessary things, but in thousands of unessential things. His love of us is superabundant and lavish. Just think what He has done to make this earthly, passing life pleasant to us! But how can we say that we make a proper attempt to reciprocate His love if we do not endeavour to avoid venial sin? It is true that when committing it we do not choose to be eternally separated from God and miserable for ever, but short of this we do not care whether we offend Him or not. Is this real love? Could a friend venture to say that he loved us, if he did not care whether he irritated and opposed us in a thousand little things? Certainly not! and just as little can we maintain that we have a filial love of God if we are indifferent whether we offend Him venially or not. Such dispositions could not fail to be highly displeasing to the Holy Ghost, who is the Person of love, and to whom

especially we owe all that we receive from the goodness of God.

As regards ourselves, this indifference about grieving the Holy Ghost by venial sin cannot fail to have the worst consequences. Even if it be true that venial sin causes no formal breach in our friendship with God, it must spoil it and make it cold. The consciousness that we are often offending God deliberately, even if not gravely, must take from our childlike intimacy with Him and diminish our confidence in Him. It must make us feel that we are not living in the right attitude towards Him, and that there is a barrier between us. On His side, God takes His love from us so far that He no longer gives us those proofs of His predilection and grace with which He is wont to favour those who carefully avoid venial sin. He withdraws that spiritual consolation and sweetness in prayer which used to be our joy; He no longer gives us special aid in times of danger and temptation, and denies us those efficient graces which are necessary for overcoming certain temptations and for making any considerable progress towards perfection. On both sides, therefore, there ensues indifference and estrangement, which usually results in our fall into mortal sin. All this being the case, it is obvious that the Holy Ghost must be displeased with any deliberate sin on our part. It offends Him, it diminishes our love for Him, it weakens our generosity and childlike confidence towards Him, and it compels Him to restrain His generosity towards us, and allow us to fall away completely from Him. Such is the malice of venial sin! Were not the Saints right when they preferred to give their lives rather than commit one voluntary venial sin?

Let a resolve not to grieve the Holy Ghost in this way be the maxim and rule of our lives. As to those

who, by their very state of life, have pledged themselves to strive after perfection, let them remember that the avoidance of all sin is the first principle of the spiritual life. To avoid all deliberate sin is the first requirement of perfection. Daily and even more often, therefore, must we renew the resolution never to commit a voluntary venial sin ; and to avoid it we must also avoid all those occasions which, as experience tells us, lead to it. Another means of avoiding it is the mortification of our passions. Finally, constant recollection and frequent prayer to the Holy Ghost are much to be recommended for the furtherance of this end, for, after the occasions of sin, nothing is so likely to lead us into it as dissipation of mind. If we give our hearts to recollection and prayer the Holy Ghost will have them in His keeping, and we shall have nothing to fear from our enemies.

CHAPTER XLIV.

SOME FLOWERS OF DEVOTION TO THE HOLY GHOST.

OUR worship of the Holy Ghost must carry us farther than the avoidance of sin for love of Him; for though to do this is the first and most important thing, still it is not all. We must try to convey honour and joy to Him by the practice of various devotions such as are in vogue in the Church and used by the faithful. We will call these devotions the flowers which we will lay upon the altar of the Holy Ghost. Let us: (1) enumerate some of these devotions; and (2) bring forward a few motives for practising them.

1. By what devotions can we honour the Holy Ghost? First, let us lay equal stress on what distinguishes devotion to Him from that which we pay to the Saints, and on what identifies it with that which we pay to the other Persons of the Blessed Trinity. Let us, in other words, remember that He is true God, and must be honoured with the homage due to God, namely, acts of adoration, faith, hope and charity. These are the most excellent acts of worship, and we should make them as often and as fervently as possible.

But besides these acts of worship the ordinary Christian life, as led in the Church, contains many practices of devotion to the Holy Ghost; and to these we must turn our attention, and use them in preference to all others. To begin with, by doing so we shall not burden ourselves with any extraordinary practices, but shall utilise those which we should practise under

any circumstances, and thus turn to our own profit what is more or less of obligation. Moreover, these devotions in vogue in the Church are, comparatively speaking, brought more often to our notice, and are most in accordance with the will of God, and, consequently, best for us. When moved to practise devotion to the Holy Ghost it will be, therefore, well to examine whether there is to be found anything already existing in the Christian life which will answer our purpose; and if we find anything we must choose it by preference and turn it to use for our special devotion. Who can fail to see how many practices are afforded by the ordinary Christian life which would serve our purpose? For instance, think how often we make the sign of the cross; how often we recite the Creed; how often we say the Glory be to the Father. A moment's thought will remind us that the Holy Ghost is especially mentioned in all these, and that, therefore, they are the expression of devotion to Him; and that, if we wish to honour Him, all we have to do is to pay attention to the words we are saying. Try to count the number of times that the words of these prayers pass your lips, and you will find that, if you have said them with attention, you have really paid a great deal of devotion to the Holy Ghost.

Those who have a special devotion to the Holy Ghost will invoke Him at the beginning of each day in the words of the *Veni Creator* or the *Veni Sancte*. They will begin no important prayer or function, such as their meditation, the Divine Office, saying or hearing Mass without an explicit invocation of Him. It is related of St. Francis Xavier that, knowing the Holy Ghost to be the Principle of all good prayer, he accustomed himself to say the *Veni Creator* between each of the canonical hours. The invocation of the Holy Ghost is still more fitting if we are called on to perform any of the functions of the Church, such as

saying Mass, dispensing the sacraments, or saying the Divine Office. Another opportunity is given us when we examine our conscience and prepare for confession, when we should carefully invoke the Holy Ghost as we are taught to do by the catechism. Again, an opportunity is given us when we make good resolutions, such as a Christian is sure to make before any more important action. We can offer what we do to Him, and pray for His grace to do it for the glory of God. Hence the practice, in vogue with many pious people, of frequently repeating the collect: *Deus qui corda fidelium*, etc., or *Actiones nostras*, etc., whenever the occasion offers. What should prevent us from raising our hearts to the Person of the Holy Ghost by short ejaculations, and commending ourselves to Him in every anxious case or difficult situation, whenever temptation assails us, or whenever we have an important decision to make? He is the Spirit of counsel, our Helper and Advocate. Thus, in the course of the most ordinary life we have many opportunities of remembering Him. It has been said that frequent remembrance and oft-repeated thought are as the breath of friendship; and should we not, therefore, accustom ourselves to think frequently and lovingly of the Holy Ghost? Moreover, in our choice of those virtues to the practice of which we intend to devote ourselves, could we not turn them to the glory of the Holy Ghost, and, if not always, at least often, practise them in His honour? This applies especially to those virtues which are in harmony with His attributes, such as all virtues of the will: love, recollection, peace, benevolence, zeal, confidence, constancy, humility and simplicity of heart. Lastly, there is hardly any place we fill, whether in Church, State, society or family, which is not in a special relation to the Holy Ghost, and which does not, therefore, afford special opportunities of remembering Him, commend

ing ourselves to Him and asking His assistance. Such occasions present themselves every day.

Why should we not choose one day in every week on which to think more frequently about the Holy Ghost, meditate on Him, read about Him, offer certain prayers and good works in His honour, say His office or hear Mass in His honour? If you are in the habit of frequenting the sacraments every week you will find an opportunity of remembering Him, because the sacraments are the chosen channels of His grace, and by them He gives Himself in fuller measure. Prayer to Him will, furthermore, enable us to receive the sacraments with greater fervour and derive more profit from them. Never let us receive Holy Communion without imploring Him to supply what is wanting to us in the way of purity, humility, zeal and charity; for thus shall we receive our Lord more worthily. It was He who prepared the saints, and especially the Mother of God, to receive our Saviour with such love. Devout meditation on the Sequence for Pentecost will help us to obtain His aid, and after we have received Communion let us never fail to thank Him. He it is who gives us the Holy Eucharist by effecting the consecration in every Mass.

All could either say or hear a Mass of the Holy Ghost once a month, or, at least, say the prayers belonging to that Mass privately. At any rate there is Pentecost every year; and to renew our devotion by its means we should make a careful preparation for it; a very good way of doing this being in the form of a novena.¹ Besides, if we are on the look out for them, many opportunities will present themselves to us of promoting or contributing to the promotion of devotion to the Holy Ghost. If you know of any one who complains of spiritual misery, difficulties in prayer and want of light, could you not turn his thoughts to the

¹ The meditations in chaps. l. and li. will serve for this purpose.

Holy Ghost and recommend devotion to Him? There are books about the Holy Ghost, pictures which represent Him; and what is to prevent your choice of these when you wish to make a pious present? By means such as these we could carry on a veritable apostolate of the Holy Ghost.

2. We must now bring forward some of the motives which should incite us to practise devotion to the Holy Ghost with zeal and perseverance. Above all we must bear in mind that devotion to Him is not optional, as it is in the case of many devotions to the saints, which nothing compels us to adopt. This is far from being the case with devotion to the Holy Ghost. He is our God, and we must believe and hope in Him and love Him. Were our whole life spent in this devotion it would not be too much; for this end were we created, it is our duty here, and will be our occupation for all eternity. In one sense we satisfy this obligation by the ordinary duties of the Christian and ecclesiastical life, and it might, therefore, be said that no one is bound to have a special devotion to Him. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that a more than ordinary devotion to Him is, to say the least of it, very fitting, for He is our God and our sovereign good. The great commandment of love: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, thy whole mind and thy whole strength," applies to the Holy Ghost, and, consequently, we cannot have too great a devotion to Him.

Another motive for such a devotion is the nearness of the Holy Ghost to us. We have seen how He lavishes His gifts on us, and how He Himself is the greatest of these gifts. He dwells personally in each one of us, and this presence and indwelling makes us to be peculiarly His temples. This calls for especial reverence on our part. When a church is dedicated to some particular saint and is called after

him, it is but to be expected that he will be especially venerated there, and that certain feasts will be solemnised in his honour. Why, otherwise, should he have been chosen patron of that church? This can be applied in a peculiar manner to the Holy Ghost. We are called and are chosen to be His temples, and it follows that He should be honoured in our hearts in a very peculiar manner, and that especial devotion should be paid to Him in them. This, to say the least of it, is no more than fitting.

As a third motive for devotion stands the fact, which it is impossible for us to ignore, that in spite of all His claims on us the Holy Ghost is not as a rule honoured in any especial manner, or not so much as He ought to be. Perhaps—in addition to the reasons already given—this comes from too little being taught about His personal attributes and operations. An enlightened and searching eye is required to gauge, in any measure, the glory of the Holy Ghost. Whatever the reason the fact is there, and surely this omission supplies us with a new motive for offering special acts of love and adoration to Him, thus to make some reparation for the want of explicit devotion on the part of His children. Doing so we shall show our filial love for Him, and shall draw down on us peculiar blessings from Him.

A last motive may be found in the example set us by the Church. In how many ways does she not honour the Holy Ghost? She has never failed to strike with the sword of her word those who dared to oppose the Holy Ghost, such as Sabellius, Macedonius and many others. Often has she sought to stir up the faithful, and assembled Councils—such as those of Lyons, Florence and the Lateran—to determine the doctrine relating to the Holy Ghost more precisely and maintain His honour by elucidating it. She has set her greatest doctors to explain and expound His

Divinity, His Procession from the Father and Son and His divine prerogatives and attributes. She has never tired of honouring Him, of invoking Him and glorifying Him with the Father and Son. Pentecost is one of the most solemn and glorious feasts of the ecclesiastical year ; and besides the celebrations of this season she has a special votive Mass in honour of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Sacrifice is never offered without His being invoked ; and in the Office, at Tierce, she recites a special hymn in His honour. In fact, she never undertakes anything of importance without invoking His aid. Without Him there is no consecration of Church or bishop, no ordination of priest, no preaching of the word of God, no anointing of king, no council, no assembly. The *Veni Creator* is being sung continually, and at every blessing which the Church gives she shows her reliance on the Holy Ghost. Without Him nothing is done. Let us follow the example of the Church ; and let us hold the conviction that the more we honour and invoke the Holy Ghost, the more we are acting according to the spirit of the Church.

CHAPTER XLV.

CHRISTIAN ART IN THE SERVICE OF THE HOLY GHOST.

WHILE considering the devotion to the Holy Ghost as practised in the Church we must not forget the part taken by Christian Art in expressing and spreading it. The use of Art in the service of the Holy Ghost is most interesting and instructive; and we will consider: (1) the manner in which the Church has always encouraged and employed it for the glory of God; and (2) how she has employed it especially for the glory of the Holy Ghost.

1. The Church has always cherished and protected Art; and this for several reasons. First, because Art is a precious gift, in perfect harmony with human nature. It is the means of expressing spiritual beauty under sensible signs, so that it pleases and rejoices the heart of man. What is spiritually beautiful is at the same time true and good. Pure spirits contemplate such beauty without a veil; but we, being composed of spirit and matter, require that it should be presented to us visibly and sensibly. We get to understand what is good and true by means of sensible signs, and thus derive joy and pleasure from it. Therefore the essence and object of Art is to present what is good and true to the understanding by means of sensible representations, in order that truth and goodness may thus become the cause of joy and pleasure to us. We can see by this why Art is such a precious gift, and why and how it answers to the wants of man, and satisfies his faculties

of understanding and will, sense and emotion. This is the first reason why the Church has always cherished and encouraged Art, and in doing this she has acted according to the spirit of the Apostle's words: "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever modest, whatsoever just, whatsoever holy, whatsoever lovely; whatsoever of good fame, if there be any virtue, if any praise of discipline, think on these things".¹ Holy Scripture extols those great men "who by their skill sought out musical tones, and published canticles of Scriptures, rich men in virtue, studying beautifulness".² By understanding, holding in honour and fostering everything good and beautiful which God has implanted in human nature the Church shows that she is the Church of humanity.

The second reason why the Church cherishes and protects Art is because it can contribute so greatly to the glory of God and the salvation of souls. By the beauty of its power of expression it is a proclamation of truth and goodness. All things that are good, true and beautiful come from God, and, as a communication and reflection of His eternal truth, goodness and beauty, lead men to Him. The more pure and harmonious is the expression of created beauty, the more closely it corresponds with both the spiritual and sensible faculties of man, and the more faithfully it represents to us the ideal of all beauty, the nearer does it bring us, either directly or indirectly, to God by the knowledge and enjoyment of Him. The sense of true beauty is, so to speak, a raising of man's whole being towards God—an emotion which the Psalmist has thus expressed: "My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God".³

This elevation of man's heart is a peculiar effect of religious Art, which takes its ideal from God or from the domain of faith, and produces in us

¹ Phil. iv. 8.

² Eccus. xliv. 5, 6.

³ Ps. lxxxiii. 3.

a supernatural enjoyment of the things of God, whence, naturally, proceed moral improvement and edification. No doubt this edification is not the proper or immediate object of Art, this being, rather, pleasure and enjoyment, but it comes from the pleasure and is often an integral part of it. There are works of religious art—such as the paintings of Fra Angelico—which are real revelations of angelic purity, suffering glorified, or intense devotion, which we cannot gaze on without experiencing a sense of divine consolation which remains with us. Never is Art so pure and powerful in its effects as when it is employed in the service of religion. It is patent to all what a wealth of edification, faith and piety are called up by the poetry, music and painting of real Christian Art, and how it purifies the lives, raises the aspirations, rejoices and sanctifies the daily duties of rich and poor. It is a true service of God which He employs as His handmaid for the benefit of His Church. Art is, indeed, a mystery in Christ and in the Church, and is made a minister of Christ, a dispenser of the mysteries of God.¹

Such are the reasons why the Church has always claimed the Arts as her own and has never sacrificed them. As inheritor of all things she has adopted from the Old Covenant whatever could be of use under the New Dispensation, especially the Psalms, which are the never-ceasing prayer of the Church and the world. It is touching to see the Church, persecuted from her infancy, driven from the surface of the globe to live among the tombs of her children in the caverns of the earth, there to celebrate the divine mysteries and await the resurrection, to see her, we say, having recourse to brush and chisel to express on the damp walls of the catacombs the objects of her faith, hope and charity. She was from the

¹ 1 Cor. iv. 1.

beginning an artist working for the glory of God. More than this, she has increased her heritage of Art, and enlarged immensely the domain of its ideals, by opening to it her deposit of supernatural truth. As soon as she became the religion of the world she stirred up the energies of Art, encouraged it, rewarded it and filled the world with its creations, to the glory of God and His saints. At one time in her history she suffered a bloody persecution in defence of the use of religious pictures, and, later, she embodied the truth of their usefulness to promote Christian piety in her deposit of faith.¹ She has made an especial use of Art for the decoration of her churches and for the beautifying of the ceremonies of public worship and the celebration of the Adorable Sacrifice. When—as in Passion-tide—she puts the great mysteries of Redemption before us as in a drama, there is not one of the seven Arts which she does not call in to perfect the ceremonies of her worship of God.

In this lavish expenditure of Art on the part of the Church the Holy Ghost comes in, and rightly, for a considerable share. Not only is He God and, therefore, an equal sharer of the honour paid to the Father and Son, but the integral constituents of Art, such as genius, inspiration, joy, pleasure, edification, are among the special operations of the Holy Ghost.

2. Let us now see how the Holy Ghost is peculiarly glorified by the Christian Arts. Let us first take ecclesiastical architecture. In all ages we find cloisters, churches, hospitals,² and especially baptisteries, dedi-

¹ *Conc. Trid.*, Sess. 25, *decr. de invocat. et ven. Reliqq.* SS.

² An extraordinary number of hospitals were dedicated to Him in Germany, under the title of the "Father of the Poor". In Bavaria alone there were forty. These institutions were more or less connected with the Order of the Holy Ghost in Rome, founded in 1204 by Innocent III. See Michael, *History of the German Nations from the End of the thirteenth Century to the End of the Middle Ages*, ii. Freiburg: 1899.

cated to the Holy Ghost. Many of these buildings are famous, as being the work of celebrated men. This is the case with the works of Cimabue, Marchione di Arezzo and Taddeo Gaddi at Florence, Arezzo and Rome. In France the Cistercians often placed their abbeys under the invocation of the Holy Ghost.

In paintings—whether on panel, glass, vellum—and in mosaics the Holy Ghost has always been a favourite subject. From the tenth and eleventh centuries down to the sixteenth we often find Him represented in human form, like the Son, at various ages. Thus, in a painting of the Creation, He is represented floating like Moses in an ark of bulrushes on the abyss of waters, while the Son stands on the shore dividing the light from the darkness. Sometimes He is depicted in the close embrace of the Father, while the Son, somewhat older, contemplates Him with love. Again He is painted of the same age as the Father and the Son, seated with Them on the throne of glory; and in this way He was often depicted in paintings of our Lady's Coronation. As an emblem He holds a book, or a dove, while the Father holds a globe and the Son a cross. But by far the most common symbol under which the Holy Ghost is depicted is a dove. This was the case, almost without exception, till the tenth century, and again from the sixteenth century down to our own time.¹ He is also represented as a dove in the pictures of certain saints, such as St. Gregory, St. Stephen, St. Jerome and St. Teresa, in the miracle of St. Joseph's rod, and especially in pictures of the Annunciation, the Baptism of our Lord, Pentecost, and in representations of the Blessed

¹ According to a Brief of Benedict XIV., dated 1st October, 1745, on the cause of the Ven. Maria Crescentia Höss of Kaufbeuren, it seems to be no longer lawful to represent the Holy Ghost under the figure of a man. See the *Life of Maria Crescentia* by F. J. Jeller, O.S.F., book ii., chap. vi.

Trinity. By a significant figure He is depicted as a dove, perched on the Son's Cross, or else hovering between the Father and the Son, proceeding now from one now from the other; while, in order to show that the Three Divine Persons are equal, one royal mantle is spread from shoulder to shoulder enclosing all equally.

The Gifts of the Holy Ghost are also sometimes depicted under the form of doves, only smaller. Generally they surround our Lord in a circle, and thus refer to the prophecy of Isaias.¹ On a painted glass window in the Cathedral of Freiburg in Breisgau, they form a nimbus round the head of the Mother of God, who holds the Infant in her arms. There is a delightful picture in the same church which represents Mary as a child being taught to read by St. Anne. With her right hand she is opening the book, while with the left she presses a dove to her heart. It is meant to signify the Holy Ghost, for it has a golden nimbus with a black cross, the wings are, as it were, in movement, and it is in haste to settle on the hand of the little Spouse of God, symbolising the love with which the Holy Ghost is about to be Himself her Teacher in all wisdom and understanding. Also as Distributor of the so-called gratuitous Gifts the Holy Ghost is often depicted as a dove. Thus, for instance, on an altar in the church of the Holy Ghost at Ravenna there is a picture of a council, in the middle of which hovers a dove. Very often He is represented surrounded by scrolls and books of the Old and New Testaments, as a symbol that He is the Principle of inspiration.

On the early Christian tombs and on their lamps we often see carved a dove with an olive branch in its beak, this being used as a symbol equally of the Holy Ghost, the Church, a Christian soul and everlasting

¹ Isa. xi. 2.

peace. Sometimes we find the Cross and other symbols of the Divine Redeemer connected with the Holy Ghost, in order to show that He is our Lord's Treasurer and that the graces which He dispenses are the fruits of the Redemption. When the Holy Ghost is painted under the form of a dove the body and wings are of a brilliant white, the beak and feet red, while the nimbus round Him is gold with either a red or black cross.¹

We have already referred to the custom of the middle ages of making the vessel in which the Blessed Sacrament was reserved in the shape of a dove, which was hung over the altar, this custom being most significant of the relation between the Holy Ghost and the Blessed Sacrament. This vessel, so shaped, was executed in the most costly and brilliant enamel work, and often the eyes were formed of precious stones. Other sacred vessels also were made in the shape of a dove, to show that the Holy Ghost is the invisible Dispenser of the sacraments.²

Among other instances of the way in which the Holy Ghost has been magnified by Christian poetry mention must be made of the Office of Pentecost, which is remarkable for its majesty and mystical sublimity. It begins by a solemn invitation to adore the divine power of the Holy Ghost: *Spiritus Domini replevit orbem terrarum, venite adoremus*. The Psalms are admirably chosen. The first (lxvii.) is a song of victory of the Synagogue after a glorious campaign, and describes in bold characters the greatness of the ancient Church, its nature as chosen by God and protected by Him, its invincibility, its triumph and exultation, and its propagation throughout the world. All these properties are types of the Christian Church, in which the Holy Ghost, sent by

¹ Didron, *Iconographie Chrétienne : Le Saint-Esprit*.

² *Ibid.*

our Lord after His Ascension, dwells, through whom she is invincible, and in whose strength she spreads all over the world on the wings of the Gospel. The second Psalm (xlvi.) proclaims, under the figure of Sion, the glory of the Church which is built like a strong city near the sea, the sight of whose calm security drives back the mighty waves of the enemy, and invites all men to be at peace with her and praise the Lord. The third Psalm (ciii.) extols in the grandest manner the creative power of the Holy Ghost in ordering, beautifying and quickening the visible creation; and of man, especially, as its head, to whom He gives victory and supremacy over everything in this earthly life. Thus man, with the material creation which is subject to him, is shown as the work of the breath of the Holy Ghost. The withdrawal of that life-giving breath causes the whole of creation to crumble into nothingness, and at its renewal all things are restored to life and beauty.

The two hymns, the *Veni Sancte Spiritus* and the *Veni Creator Spiritus*, stand forth prominently among the other hymns of the Office, and we reserve our meditation on these for the following chapters.

Such are some of the jewels which Christian Art has contributed to the glory of the Holy Ghost. We have considered the manner in which the Church turns everything to account to express her love and worship of Him. Not content with proclaiming her faith in Him by her preaching and the definitions of her Councils, she sets her doctrine before us and clothes and animates it by painting, music and poetry, and thus makes the object of her own faith and love more present in our hearts, to take possession of them and use them for His service. The Holy Spirit is the Principle of life and of every other spirit, and, therefore, all life and every spirit are called on to adore Him. Not only is He Truth and Goodness, but He

is Beauty also. He is the Lord of light, colour, harmony, and of all the great emotions and noble thoughts of which man is capable. From Him come the sweetness of sound, the delight of the eyes, the beauty of form; from Him comes not only the inspiration which makes prophets and poets, but also that which makes grand ideals and the power to realise them in word, music or colour, or hew them out from the lifeless wood, stone or metal. It is right and fitting that all sacred Art should praise and magnify her Lord.

It is, moreover, the Holy Ghost who instructs the Church in the meaning and beauties of Christian Art. The Church may be likened to that picture of our Lady in the Cathedral of Freiburg already referred to. God is holding open before her the book of truth and beauty; but it is the Holy Ghost whom she bears in her heart, who points out to her its sense and meaning.

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE *VENI SANCTE SPIRITUS*.

THERE exist several beautiful hymns to the Holy Ghost; those of Adam of St. Victor being among the most celebrated. But the best known and most used are the Sequence, *Veni Sancte Spiritus*, and the hymn, *Veni Creator Spiritus*. Their substance contains that of all others.

The *Veni Sancte*, written by an unknown poet of the twelfth century, is the Sequence in the Mass of Whit Sunday, and may well be called the canticle of the spiritual life, the sigh of the soul on its earthly pilgrimage, the cry for purity, peace, liberty and a higher life. On the one hand the Sequence shows us man as he is in this earthly life, a prey to unrest, exhaustion, impurity and perplexity, and in a state of poverty and helplessness as far as concerns the attainment of a heavenly life. But on the other hand it shows us the Holy Ghost, the Friend, Guardian and Father of the poor, with His hands full of rich gifts and His heart full of compassion and beneficence, not only the Companion of our pilgrimage, but the Guest of our heart which He purifies, heals, enriches and makes happy. He desires to be our Light, Strength, Protector and Father; and He secures everything for us—merit, blessed end and happiness in heaven. The canticle is beautiful, tender and touching, and is the voice of all interior souls.

Like all prayers and hymns the Sequence combines invocation, titles, praise and petition; the titles given

to the Holy Ghost being mainly taken from His relation to the spiritual life.

FIRST STANZA.

The first stanza comprises four titles which it gives to the Holy Ghost, and reiterates five times the petition to Him to come and give Himself to us.

FIRST HALF-STANZA.

1. *Veni Sancte Spiritus.*

The first title of praise is the personal name, Holy Ghost, a name most full of majesty, and equal in dignity to those of the Father and Son. He proceeds from the Father and Son by love, and is, therefore, the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity—the Person of Love. Hence, He is “the Holy,” not only because He sanctifies all things, but because He is the Person of Love, and all holiness consists in the love of God. Hence, also, He is the Ghost or Spirit, because He is the Breath of love common to the Father and Son. In Him Father and Son are one Spirit,¹ and what more sublime can be said of Him?

2. *Et emitte cœlitus.* 3. *Lucis tuæ radium.*

This petition relates to the sending and coming of the Holy Ghost, for “to be sent” and “to come” mean the same thing. The Holy Ghost comes because He is sent. His mission is the eternal procession from the Father and Son manifested by a supernatural operation in creatures. The object of a

¹ See chap. iv. The doctrine has already been enlarged on in the course of this book, and it will be sufficient to refer the reader back for further details to the different passages in which the subject has been treated.

Mission of a Divine Person is the communication of something resembling His own procession to the creature by a supernatural operation. The Son, begotten of the Father, is sent by Him, so that by this Mission we may become partakers of the Divine Sonship; and so the Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and Son, is sent by Them, that by His Mission He may be the bond of love which unites us to the Father and Son even as He unites Them by His procession from both.¹

The Mission of the Holy Ghost is accomplished in us by the communication of sanctifying and actual grace. By grace He comes to us, and we pray for it under the figure of light. Light is here asked for so far as it implies fire, which warms, rejoices and fructifies, and, therefore, relates to the will and affections; for so far as it enlightens the understanding it is the figure of the Son, the eternal Wisdom and Truth. Paying attention to this we see in what sense the Holy Ghost and His grace are as the light and sun of our hearts, and the Principle of all that is good in us in the same way that in the physical order light is the principle of all fecundity.

These beautiful words, descriptive of the pricelessness of the grace of the Holy Ghost, and the reiterated invocation: "Come! Send!" show us plainly what we have to do. First, we must have a great desire for this light. How precious it is! How precious is even one ray of it! Even as it is impossible to enumerate the beauties of one single spring day, so is it impossible to calculate the price of one single grace. One of its rays is sufficient to make us saints. Secondly, we must pray instantly for this light of grace. As light comes to us from the sun, so does the grace of the Holy Ghost come to us "from heaven". It is a supernatural gift of heaven and we

¹ See chap. iv.

cannot obtain it of ourselves. Thirdly, we must endeavour to remove all that would impede this light of grace. A worldly spirit, dissipation of mind and sloth may be compared to the mists which obscure the light of the sun.

SECOND HALF-STANZA.

This presents the Holy Ghost to us in three of His most beautiful and amiable attributes.

4. *Veni Pater pauperum.*

We are, first of all, reminded of our poverty. It is very great. Of ourselves we are quite destitute of all supernatural good and of God the sovereign Good; we are denuded of virtues, good works and merit; we are afflicted by many natural and supernatural ailments of soul and body; we are poor and defenceless, strangers and orphans, surrounded by adversaries. And yet, for all this, we cannot ask and pray as we ought.¹ We do not know how poor and miserable we are, and think we are rich and in need of no help. Can we conceive greater poverty and necessity than this? And the whole human race is in the same state, and is one vast family of poor and needy!

But behold! In our distress the Holy Ghost comes to us as "the Father of the poor," as One who is not only moved to compassion by our poverty, but loves us on its account, who desires to be our Father and care for us. As God, He is really our Father; as the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity, the Person of Love, His attributes are goodness and benevolence, nay more, He is in Himself Goodness, Benevolence and Compassion. As Lord,² He is rich, and offers us the treasures of His divinity; He is, as our Lord promised, our Comforter,³ the Father of us who are

¹ Rom. viii. 26.

² 1 Cor. xii. 5.

³ John xiv. 26.

orphans,¹ the Helper of our infirmities,² who will nourish, clothe and protect us, provide us with all things, and finally receive us into our eternal home.

Let us bear in mind this paternal goodness of His, and we shall fear nothing, nor be discouraged. We need not be afraid to seek His aid; let us appeal to Him again and again and tell Him what we want. He knows our misery better than we know it ourselves; and our necessity is His glory. The treasures of His riches and mercy are sufficient to relieve the wants of millions of worlds.

5. *Veni Dator munerum.*

As the Father of the poor, the Holy Ghost is the Dispenser of gifts. As the third and last Person of the Blessed Trinity, He is the Mediator of God's gifts to creatures. He is, as it were, the golden brim over which the goodness of God pours itself; He is the Hand by which everything is distributed. To give is the act of love. He is the Gift, and that name is given to Him because He is the Pledge of the mutual love of the Father and Son; and of all the gifts which He gives to men He Himself is the greatest and most precious.

The Holy Ghost may be called the Treasurer of God and of our Lord. Do we desire health of body? He gives it. Do we desire skill or influence? He grants them.³ Do we desire grace and gratuitous gifts? He communicates them to us. With the institution of the Church He gave us faith, the commandments, the sacraments, infallible guidance and a sure expectation of heaven. The Church is the store-home of the world, and the Holy Ghost is the Treasurer of the inexhaustible riches of Christ.

¹John xiv. 18.

²Rom. viii. 26.

³See chaps. ix. and x.

First, then, we must confess that the Holy Ghost is the Mediator of all good gifts, and must thank Him. Furthermore, we must accept His gifts. His desire is that we should enrich ourselves by them; and this is why He offers them to us. If, after this, we remain poor it is our fault. Lastly, we must utilise His gifts for His glory and our own benefit.

6. *Veni Lumen cordium.*

The word "heart" is used here in the sense of our higher and lower wills, the higher of which is a purely spiritual faculty of the mind, whereas the lower is a faculty of our animal life, and is considered here especially so far as it is influenced by our higher faculties. Our heart, thus understood, in order to be happy requires a threefold light.

The first light of the will is love. Love embraces God as its sovereign good, and sees everything else in Him. It is the deepest energy, the chief stimulus, and, in a sense, also the eye of the will. Even as truth is the light of the understanding, so are goodness and beauty the light of the will, which they take possession of and enlighten by love. Without the love of God and man the heart is a cold, dark abode of covetous self-love; but if God shed on it but one ray of His goodness and beauty by raising it to His love and to the love of all that belongs to Him, it will be illuminated and enlarged into a fitting dwelling-place for God, large enough to contain Him and all mankind. The Holy Ghost is Love, and created love is a ray of His love which He sheds on our hearts: "The charity of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Ghost who is given to us".¹

¹Rom. v. 5.

The second light of the will is peace. Peace is the undisturbed possession of those good things which we have sought; and is, consequently, the fruit and effect of charity. By charity we are united to God and possess Him, and thus the peace of possession succeeds the yearning of aspiration. Peace with man is also an effect of charity, because it unites us to Him, and places our will in harmony with his. The Holy Ghost being the Principle of charity is also the Principle of that peace which surpasseth all understanding,¹ and rejoiceth the heart.² This is why peace is counted among the fruits of the Holy Ghost,³ who is the essential bond of peace between God and man.

The third light of the will is joy. This also is an effect of love. If we possess in peace those good things which we have sought after and found, we experience a sensation of satisfaction, and this feeling is one of joy and consolation. As the Holy Ghost is the Principle of love and peace, so also is He the Principle of joy now and in eternity.

Such is the threefold light with which the Holy Ghost rejoices and illuminates our poor hearts. To this light belong all feelings of calm and content in the service of God, all aspirations and enlargements of heart which make us swift to run in the way of God's commandments,⁴ all interior sweetness of charity, all that welling-up of joy and exultation in God which overflow from the narrow vessel of the heart and inebriate the bodily senses with a torrent of delight.⁵ Such are the waves of light which the Holy Ghost allows to flow over our hearts, and by which He makes us happy even here below. All this is, however, only the pledge of the love, peace and joy of heaven.

¹ Phil. iv. 7.

² Col. iii. 15.

³ Gal. v. 22.

⁴ Ps. cxviii. 32.

⁵ Ps. xxxv. 9.

SECOND STANZA.

FIRST HALF-STANZA.

In this half-stanza the Holy Ghost is extolled generally as our most excellent Comforter.

1. *Consolator optime.*

In this life we stand greatly in need of consolation on account of the manifold evils which rob us of it. These evils are: sin, temptation which places us in danger of sinning, doubt, uncertainty, pusillanimity, aridity, a weary longing for heaven, and, finally, exterior trials and death. The Holy Ghost is our Comforter in the midst of all these evils. First, He comforts us by the Scriptures, which were inspired for our comfort,¹ which solve all the problems of life and show us our end and the way thereto. Secondly, He comforts us by the Sacraments, by which He forgives past, and preserves us from future, sin. Thirdly, He comforts us by His actual graces which give light to the understanding and impulse, courage and joy to the will. Fourthly, He comforts us by the thought of heaven and the everlasting reward of all toil and trouble here. Lastly, He comforts us by Jesus and Mary, whom—for our sakes—He has made so powerful, kind and helpful. He is, in short, the best of all comforters, because He is by nature consolation and peace,² because He is Lord over all the means of consolation, and because He lavishes these means on us, not only exteriorly, but interiorly in our soul and its faculties.

This being so, we must look to the Holy Ghost for comfort before all else. He is the Source of all consolation; and we cannot live without it. A state

¹ Rom. xv. 4.

² Isa. li. 22.

of desolation is not only hard to bear, but may also become the occasion of sin or imperfection. Therefore is it that the Church prays so often that we may always rejoice in His consolation.

2. *Dulcis Hospes animæ.*

These words tell us why the Holy Ghost is the best of all comforters. He is the Guest of the sanctified soul, and dwells there personally and not only by His gifts and graces. We are the temples of the Holy Ghost,¹ who gives Himself to us when pouring forth charity into our hearts.²

This indwelling of the Holy Ghost is full of advantages to us. First, it makes us like the Most Holy Trinity who dwells in us. Secondly, it causes us honour and joy, by showing us how much God loves us. Thirdly, it enriches us with great possessions, makes our good works meritorious, and ensures to us the special protection of God. Lastly, it affords us a sure pledge of eternal happiness in heaven. In heaven we shall possess no more, essentially, than we possess here, but it will be in a different and far more perfect manner. This hope should be our consolation here below.

The Holy Ghost, this Guest so sublime and beloved, must not be merely received into our hearts, but must be welcomed by us. We may do nothing which could drive Him away, for while we are on earth He is only a Guest, and will be driven away by any mortal sin, which is a direct outrage against Him. Further, we should not grieve Him by venial sin, or by any want of attention or love. Far from this, we must offer Him every honour and service possible to us. Surely so beloved a Guest is worthy of all love!

¹ 1 Cor. vi. 19.

² Rom. v. 5. See chap. xxxvi.

3. *Dulce Refrigerium.*

The Holy Ghost is not only our Guest, but also our refreshment. He brings new life to us, and this in three ways.

Our life is a pilgrimage, like that of the Israelites through the wilderness; and while we are making it the Holy Ghost refreshes us. Even as of old God refreshed His wandering people by the shadow of the pillar of cloud and by the water from the rock, so now does the Holy Ghost refresh us by His life-giving consolations. The water and the cloud are types of the Holy Ghost. As the Breath of God, warming and life-giving, He is the refreshment and life of the soul.

In the second place the Holy Ghost is the refreshment of the holy souls in Purgatory. While with the ardent zeal of His justice He burns away their stains,¹ He refreshes them by holy patience, by the love of God and by their longing to offer complete satisfaction to Him. He also raises up holy men and women on earth to help them by their prayers and penances. Thus the Holy Ghost is in very truth *igneus refrigerator*, as St. Hildegarde calls Him.

In the third place the Holy Ghost refreshes the souls of the blessed by beatific love and joy. Even as the Son, by the communication of the light of glory, will be their everlasting light, so will the Holy Ghost, by the out-pouring of His peace, be their everlasting rest.

SECOND HALF-STANZA.

When we look in detail at the manner in which the Holy Ghost is our comfort and refreshment, we see that it has a connection with three trials of life.

¹ Isa. iv. 4.

4. *In labore requies.*

In the state of innocence labour was nothing but a pleasant occupation; but in our fallen state it has become a punishment, and is often a heavy cross. But in the following way the Holy Ghost makes the burden easy to bear. First, He lightens labour by telling us that it is a divine precept.¹ Work is at once a law of God and a requirement of our nobler nature. Secondly, He makes labour easy by giving us skill and talent, and by overcoming in us the propensity to laziness, discontent and disgust; while on the other hand He moderates any inordinate zest for external work which might be a danger to perfection and even to salvation. The Holy Ghost is the Principle of that well-ordered industry, which, starting from God and a desire for salvation, devotes itself to exterior occupations and then returns to God and the interior life. In this way He is truly rest in labour. Thirdly, He makes labour pleasant by holding out a reward. The reward of Christian labour is satisfaction for past sins, preservation from those of the future, supernatural merit, the power to do much good for the Church and the poor, and, finally, the reward of heaven. In these ways the Holy Ghost teaches us how to find rest and satisfaction in labour.

5. *In æstu temperies.*

The second trial of life is the many-sided warfare which we have to wage in the heats of life. This warfare is threefold.

The first enemy against which we have to contend is the violence of our own inordinate passions. The Holy Ghost calms the internal uproar by the cardinal virtues of temperance and fortitude which enable us to con-

¹ Gen. iii. 19.

tend against intemperance, impurity, pride and pusillanimity, and by the Gift of holy fear which fills us with reverence for the presence of God and tames the licentiousness of our sensual nature.

We have, in the second place, to fight against the temptations of the evil one, which are innumerable, dangerous and often fatal. The Holy Ghost renders this fight enduring and gives us the victory by His protection and by the assistance of His grace, and also by endowing us with fearlessness and endurance, and sometimes by turning the outward danger from us.

In the third place we have to contend against exterior tribulations and persecutions, out of which He enables us to come victorious by peace both exterior and interior. Interior peace consists in the testimony of a good conscience and in a joyful willingness to suffer something for God. Exterior peace consists in the seasons of calm and serenity which often follow the struggle. This twofold peace is an operation and gift of the Holy Ghost who comforts us internally by His presence, and by His Providence determines and directs the outward course of our lives. The consolation is often greatest when the adversities we suffer are most trying. "I exceedingly abound with joy in all our tribulation," says St. Paul.¹ The comfort and protection which the Holy Ghost has sometimes given to martyrs and confessors in the midst of their torments is wonderful. To know what He can do it is only necessary to read the accounts of the martyrdoms of, for example, St. Lawrence, St. Tiburtius or St. Lucy.

6. *In fletu solatium.*

A third trial in this life is the grief and pain we suffer for the loss of something dear to us and the

¹ 2 Cor. vii. 4.

tears we shed over it. Many useless, bitter and hopeless tears are shed in this life, but some tears are holy, sweet and meritorious. Such tears may be called tears of the Holy Ghost.

First among them are tears of sorrow for sin. These are beautiful and precious. They wash away the stains of sin, they console the sinner, and they move God to forgiveness. Repentance, confidence and love combine to make up their beauty and to effect their fruit. The second class of holy tears are those shed from compassion for the woes of men, or those called forth by the sufferings of our Lord and by offences against God. The third class of holy tears are caused by joy at the thought of heaven and the desire to see God.

All these tears are the work of the Holy Ghost. How worthy of love must He be if He can turn even our tears—the token of bitterest woe—into sweetness. There exists what is called the gift of tears, which is to be especially ascribed to Him. He who desires to have a share in this gift must often commend himself to the Holy Ghost, and be most careful to guard himself against pride, sensuality, dissipation of mind and hardness of heart.

THIRD STANZA.

This stanza can be divided into three parts. The first is a sublime invocation of the Holy Ghost, the second a corresponding petition. The third part, in the three lines which follow, shows the motive of the petition.

1. *O lux beatissima. . . .*

This invocation is nothing less than a confession of the divinity of the Holy Ghost. God alone is light ;¹

¹ John i. 5.

and creatures shine in this light, and are only its images and representatives. The Son also is light, and this is why the Holy Ghost is distinguished here as the "blessed light"—light beneficent, pleasant, rejoicing, healing, life-giving. Such is the Holy Ghost in the Godhead, being the eternal Breath of love and joy; such is He in creation, being the penetrating, warming, gladdening Breath of life. All creatures move in the brightness of His light, and drink of love, life and joy from His golden cup: "The Spirit of the Lord hath filled the whole world".¹

2. *Reple cordis intima.* 3. *Tuorum fidelium.*

The power of the Holy Ghost fills all things; and this truth is now made apparent in man who is the crown and soul of creation, and is, as it were, the epitome of the universe. The Holy Ghost fills man, even from a natural point of view, because He is the principle of his physical life, his mental development, his dominion over nature and his social life.² But from a supernatural point of view the Holy Ghost fills man in a far higher way; for He penetrates, quickens and sanctifies everything about him, to the deepest and innermost faculties of his soul. By sanctifying grace He reaches the substance of his soul and gives it a supernatural spirituality.³ By the virtues—both theological and non-theological—He takes hold of man's faculties, his understanding, will and affections, and gives him power to act supernaturally.⁴ By the Gifts He supplies the virtues with a new range of power, makes their practice easy and pleasant, and subjects them entirely to His guidance;⁵ fills them anew with preventing and assisting grace, and sets them in movement.⁶ Lastly, He communicates

¹ Wisd. i. 7.

² See chap. ix.

³ See chap. xxi.

⁴ See chap. xxii.

⁵ See chap. xxv.

⁶ See chap. xxxiii.

wonderful powers to the sanctified man, which enable him to work more efficaciously for his neighbour and for the Church—we mean graces gratuitously given.¹ In this way does the Holy Ghost completely fill man, with all his faculties and powers, and his whole life, for the benefit of himself and of his neighbour, giving him the fulness of power in abundant and superabundant measure. Truly is He all in all and worketh all in all.²

4. *Sine tuo numine.* 5. *Nihil est in homine.*
6. *Nihil est innoxium.*

This is the simple and obvious conclusion drawn from the preceding words. If the Holy Ghost fills man, and if all fulness is from Him, it follows that man has nothing and is nothing without Him and His divine power and dominion. In the supernatural life man is nothing without the Holy Ghost, but is dead and in a state of disgrace with God. Disgrace with God means sin and death.

It is plain, therefore, that the Holy Ghost is absolutely necessary to us, and that we can do nothing without Him. Let us confess this humbly, and pray and beseech Him, with a lively realisation of our own poverty and insufficiency, not to take His assistance from us, but to fill us with His grace, to the glory of God and for the good of ourselves and others. Let us turn to the Holy Ghost with a childlike spirit and repeat to Him again and again that we can do nothing and desire nothing good without Him.

FOURTH STANZA.

In this stanza the idea which was suggested in the last, that without the Holy Ghost we are in a state

¹ See chap. xx.

² 1 Cor. xii. 6.

of sin and disgrace, is illustrated by the enumeration of six among our graver weaknesses and necessities.

1. *Lava quod est sordidum.*

All sin, whether original or actual, whether mortal or venial, makes us unclean. The uncleanness of sin is real, and destroys, or, at least, deforms, the spiritual beauty which makes us pleasing to God. This uncleanness was the result of original sin, and, alas, clings to us still by, at least, venial sin. To be exempt from this is a privilege belonging only to the Mother of God, for no other can—unless helped by grace in a special way—live long without incurring some slight sin. And as for mortal sin, we are not free from the danger of committing it till we have drawn our last breath.

It is the Holy Ghost who frees us from sin. Even in the Old Testament He was promised under the figure of pure and purifying water.¹ He actually cleanses us from original sin by the water of Baptism, and from personal sins by the Sacraments of Penance and Extreme Unction. He furthermore cleanses us from sin by tears of penance and contrition, by horror of sin, by zeal in making satisfaction for it, by watching and by prayer.

He is the Spirit of penance and contrition and by them effects this in us. By them He restores cleanness to our hearts and causes even our venial sins to grow fewer and fewer. Let us often pray for cleanness of heart, following in this the example of the Church who asks for it so often in her prayers to the Holy Ghost.

2. *Riga quod est aridum.*

The second evil of life is unfruitfulness, which is the effect of hardness and dryness of soul. As grass,

¹ Ezech. xxxvi. 25.

trees and flowers lose their verdure and life in time of drought, so does the soul become unfruitful in virtue and good works from want of that spiritual sap which comes from the dew of inspiration and consolation. Under these circumstances our soul becomes as "earth without water,¹ wherewith the mower filleth not his hand".²

Aridity comes as a rule from neglect of prayer, the consequence of which is the deprivation of certain stimulating graces. Prayer is the chief means of grace. Without it the dew and rain from above dry up, but by it the flood-gates of heaven are opened, the life-giving and fertilising rain of grace falls on us, accompanied by illumination and consolation and especially by a willingness to do all that God requires of us; thus under its influence the flowers of virtue and good works spring up and blossom.

It is the Holy Ghost who teaches us how to pray. He impels us to it, and shows us why we should pray and how we should pray, and, moreover, He provides for our prayer being heard.³ By prayer the Holy Ghost waters the garden of our hearts and makes it bring forth flowers and fruit. Let us, therefore, never neglect it.

3. *Sana quod est saucium.*

A third evil are the wounds which make our souls sick and are the effects of original sin, which injured the integrity and perfection in which our nature was created. They consist in a darkening of the understanding, weakness of the will and the dominion of concupiscence. Though not curtailing what belongs essentially to our nature they are hindrances and evil states which give occasion to sin and impede our progress.

¹ Ps. cxlii. 6.

² Ps. cxxviii. 7.

³ See chap. xxxv.

The Holy Ghost has instituted two great remedies for the cure of these infirmities. The first is the Church, in which the priest is the lawful physician, and spiritual instruction and the sacraments the medicine of life. The second remedy is the religious state, in which the soul goes through a special treatment and cure. This cure consists in the regular and persevering practice of prayer and mortification. The effect of these means rightly applied is infallible. Interiorly the Holy Ghost cures our weakness by the healing power of actual grace. He is in very truth the Physician of the soul—the Good Samaritan who pours into our wounds wine and oil whereby they are healed.

4. *Flecte quod est rigidum.*

A fourth evil is stubbornness of the will. A frequent, nay a usual, source of this is pride of intellect. The evil consists, therefore, in a blindness of the understanding and obstinacy of the will, which harden and petrify the heart in respect of the known will of God and the guidance of the Holy Ghost. St. Stephen reproached the Jews for this hardness. "Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised of heart," said he, "you always resist the Holy Ghost."¹ A less malicious development of the evil lies in slight infidelities to the guidance of the Holy Ghost, in a certain stiffness and want of amiability in our intercourse with our neighbour, and a wooden inflexibility in censuring and correcting the faults of others.

The Holy Ghost seeks to correct these faults by the Gift of piety and by the consolation and sweetness of the Gift of wisdom, which makes us childlike, gentle and yielding, and combines a humble knowledge with an intelligent and amiable spirit of submission:² "The Spirit of understanding is holy, one,

¹ Acts vii. 51.

² See chaps. xxviii. and xxxii.

manifold, subtle, sure, sweet, loving, and containing all spirits".¹ In order to share in these precious advantages we must most carefully guard against venial sin, pride and self-opiniativeness.

5. *Fove quod est frigidum.*

The fifth evil is coldness, which implies a defect of love of God and man. Coldness comes from self-love, whether it be expressed by pride or by sensuality. Even as a north or east wind shrivels up the life of the shoots of spring so does self-love sap the capacity for spiritual life, so that it cannot be exercised for either God or man. It makes our whole being cold and frigid, so that it has no tenderness or sensibility for anything except self.

The Holy Ghost counteracts this frigidity by a true love for God and man. Nothing is so contrary to self-love as love of God and man, and nothing in man is more the work of the Holy Ghost than this love. Everything in the Holy Ghost—His name, His origin, His life and existence and the object of His operation—conveys the idea of love to us.² We must unceasingly pray Him to melt the ice of our self-love with His warming, purifying and quickening breath, and not let us die until we have attained to a perfect love of God.

6. *Rege quod est devium.*

The final evil from which the Holy Ghost can deliver us is a wandering from our last end. Everything which is done either contrary to our end, or outside it, is so much labour lost. Our end is God, salvation, heaven. All thoughts, intentions, words or works which have an earthward tendency and nothing

¹ Wisd. vii. 22, 23.

² See chaps. xxiii. and xxiv.

to do with eternity are wasted. Our senses are wasted if we give them unbridled liberty, and all our life is wasted if it does not tend towards its last end.

Dissipation of mind and action is corrected by the Holy Ghost by His invitation to recollection and an interior life, and by the facility and pleasantness which He imparts to it. An interior life consists above all in the attention which we pay to our soul, for the purpose of checking whatever we find in it that is evil or inordinate, but it consists also in the cultivation of supernatural principles, intentions and good works. In this way our whole life will be directed towards its one everlasting end. We must, therefore, renounce all licence of the senses, all merely natural motives of choice, and subject ourselves to the guidance of the Holy Ghost, who is the best and only Leader on the road to salvation.

FIFTH STANZA.

FIRST HALF-STANZA.

1. *Da tuis fidelibus.*
2. *In te confidentibus.*
3. *Sacrum septenarium.*

It is obvious that the seven Gifts of the Holy Ghost are referred to in these words.

The Gifts of the Holy Ghost are, like the virtues, permanent faculties of the soul which enable it to perform supernatural good works. Their object is to render the practice of virtue easy and pleasant, to subject us entirely to the guidance of the Holy Ghost, and to make us capable of a higher and more sublime spiritual life. For this end they act on the virtues, theological and non-theological. The Gifts of understanding, knowledge and wisdom are of special assistance to the theological virtues, while the other Gifts

influence the cardinal virtues. The Gift of counsel aids and perfects the virtue of prudence, piety that of justice, fortitude the virtue of the same name, while holy fear assists the virtue of temperance. Under the influence of the Gifts the virtues do their work easily and without fatiguing effort. We all possess these Gifts, for they were infused into our souls with sanctifying grace ; and we must value them because they fill such a sublime and necessary part in the spiritual life. The supernatural virtues make it possible for us to do what is right ; it is the Gifts which give the facility. Moreover, they unite us closely to God and make us the living instruments of the Holy Ghost. Let us often ask Him to stir up these Gifts within us and to strengthen their influence over us.¹

SECOND HALF-STANZA.

The remaining three lines describe the action of the Gifts of the Holy Ghost on the whole course of our life.

4. *Da virtutis meritum.*

By the merit of virtue here mentioned there is to be understood the practice of a Christian life in the exercise of virtue and good works.

Apart from justification, with which the Gifts were infused into our souls, good works consist in the preservation of the state of grace and in its employment in our fight against temptation. Secondly, they consist in the observance of the commandments and the duties of our state ; and, thirdly, in the practice of some particular virtues and other good works. For virtues to be meritorious it is necessary that, besides being performed in a state of grace, the act should be neither

¹ See chap. xxv. *sqq.*

bad nor immoral in itself, and that the intention should be supernaturally good.

But this can be accomplished only under the influence of the Holy Ghost, by the operation of His efficacious grace and by His Gifts. Thus, good works are really the fruits of the Holy Ghost in us. He it is who by the operations of His grace makes our life fruitful for eternity and like a "plentiful field which the Lord has blessed".¹

5. *Da salutis exitum.*

The consummation of a Christian's life which has been passed in a state of grace and in the practice of good works is a happy death. It is the second effect of the grace and guidance of the Holy Ghost, and is the object of the petition in this verse.

Perseverance is the condition of a happy death. On God's side, perseverance is a special gift of grace, because it comprises a number of efficacious graces which we cannot merit and which are given to us with the intention that we should be found by death in a state of grace and in the exercise of good works. On our side, perseverance supposes a correspondence with grace. We must persevere in the exercise of good works until death puts an end to the struggle. Thus any one can see the importance and necessity of the grace of perseverance, which is, on this account, called "the great gift of perseverance". We cannot merit it, we can only obtain it by prayer both humble and earnest.² The Holy Ghost, the Giver of all good things, can alone give it to us.

Death is the termination of this earthly life and the immediate preparation for heaven. It is of infinite importance because it decides our eternal destiny; but,

¹ Gen. xxvii. 27. See chaps. xxxiii. and xxxiv.

² See chap. xxxiv.

at the same time, it is exceedingly painful to us on account of our frailty, weakness and helplessness, and also on account of the attacks which our spiritual enemy always makes on us during our last moments. In order to come out victorious from the struggle and be sanctified by it we need grace, consolation and protection. The Holy Ghost is nigh unto us, and who could count the numbers of His poor creatures whom He protects from their enemies at the hour of death. He comes to their aid with no less than three sacraments, with many interior graces, with impulses of confidence, patience and conformity to the will of God. He helps them to offer the hardest and most costly of sacrifices—even that of their own lives. As our Lord, by the Holy Ghost, offered Himself unspotted unto God,¹ so by Him will our death become precious in the sight of the Lord² and an imitation of the Sacrifice on the Cross. A happy Christian death may be called a masterpiece of the Holy Ghost's. Therefore, while we are still living let us commit to Him our preparation for death, especially by leading a holy life. Death is not only the end, but also the result of our life.

6. *Da perenne gaudium.*

This everlasting joy is another word for heaven. The immediate preparation for the perfect happiness of heaven is the resurrection; for the resurrection implies the reunion of the body and soul, to live for ever together in glory. In many respects this glorious event belongs to the Holy Ghost, and He is its Principle. The dwelling of the Holy Ghost in us is a pledge of our glorious resurrection, as Scripture says: "And if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus Christ from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up

¹ Heb. ix. 14.

² Ps. cxv. 15.

Jesus from the dead shall quicken also your mortal bodies, because of His Spirit that dwelleth in you".¹ Furthermore, He is the effective cause of the resurrection. He is the Principle of all perfection and the Giver of life in the highest sense of the word. The glorious transformation of our body and its reunion with the glorified soul will be the culmination of the development and perfection of the life of the body. The Holy Ghost, who in the beginning fashioned the body of the first man in such a wondrous manner, who quickened it with the breath of life, who sanctifies our body with the sacraments and consecrates it with His indwelling, will one day put the finishing stroke to it, and transform it into a being worthy to bear His image. The natural body will rise a spiritual body² and will receive the properties of a glorified body.

In heaven, too, the Holy Ghost has His share in so far as the beatitude of heaven comprises love, joy and peace—perfect joy and peace and fulness of love—communicated by the immediate vision of God and the close union of the blessed with Him their Sovereign Good. This share of the Holy Ghost in our beatitude is very beautiful. He Himself will be our rest and joy for all eternity, and thus by God we shall be able to rejoice in God. Then at last we shall love the Holy Ghost with an adequate love—with all our heart, with all our strength and with our whole soul.³

¹ Rom. viii. 11.

² 1 Cor. xv. 44.

³ See chap. xlii.

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE *VENI CREATOR SPIRITUS*.

THE *Veni Creator Spiritus*—composed, probably, before the tenth century—is a rhapsody or collection of grand pictures in which the Holy Ghost is represented to us as descending from the throne of unapproachable majesty to carry out with truly divine power the intentions of grace and the promises of God, and make manifest His work as the Dispenser of light and life. All things live in Him and by Him. Man, with his reason and affections, his gifts of grace and his physical faculties, is the first among the creatures of the Holy Ghost, in whom he finds protection here below and perfect happiness in heaven. Everything in this hymn is grand. Each fragment of it contains a history of creation, and each verse opens out vistas of the majesty of the Holy Ghost. In a word, it is a most solemn confession of faith in the Holy Ghost and a magnificent invocation of Him.

FIRST STANZA.

This stanza is composed of a sublime invocation of the Holy Ghost, which is followed by three general petitions.

1. *Veni Creator Spiritus.*

The Holy Ghost is addressed as the Creator Spirit. This is, therefore, a solemn confession of His divinity.

To create is an attribute inalienable from divinity, for it is simply an act of omnipotence. The term "Creator Spirit" denotes, therefore, the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity as the Creator of the world.

Creation as an exterior work belongs essentially to all the Divine Persons equally. It is ascribed to the Father as an act of power and to the Son as a work of wisdom. Nevertheless it is to be ascribed in a peculiar manner to the Holy Ghost: first, because creation is an act of free goodness and love; secondly, because it is a reflection and revelation of this goodness; thirdly, because development and perfection are inseparable from creation, and these imply guidance. The Holy Ghost is the Principle of perfection, and His permanent attributes are the giving of life and guidance (*vivificatio et gubernatio*).

In nature the Holy Ghost showed Himself as the Principle of life and perfection in that He separated the elements, ordered them and made them fruitful; crowned the material creation by creating man, and perfected man himself by making him a social being.¹ But by grace the Holy Ghost is manifested as the Principle of a creation of a far higher order, for grace is a communication of the divine life. And further still, in eternal glory He is the Principle of beatific love and joy, the culmination of the happiness of heaven. Thus in all orders of creation the Holy Ghost is the seal of perfection, even as He is so in the Godhead itself. This invocation as Creator Spirit is most sublime, and the title by which we address Him puts before us our beginning and end, and our relation to Him as His creatures. There is no relation more close than that between Creator and creature. The title, therefore, is a confession of the divinity of the Holy Ghost, and expresses briefly His

¹ See chaps. viii. and ix.

majesty and omnipotence. Let us then renew our confession of His divinity and invoke and thank Him.¹

2. *Mentes tuorum visita.* 3. *Imple superna gratia.*
4. *Quæ tu creasti pectora.*

There now follow three general petitions to the Holy Ghost.

The first petition is that He will come. This coming of the Holy Ghost is His everlasting procession from the Father and Son with the addition of a supernatural operation in us which manifests His procession to us, and communicates a certain resemblance to it. This operation consists in the communication of sanctifying and actual grace, faith and charity, and the infusion of the virtues, gifts and gratuitous graces. By these supernatural effects the Holy Ghost comes to us in proportion with our needs. This first petition is made in the name of all men—unbelievers, heretics and faithful, just and unjust, rulers and people. All men, without exception, live by the coming of the Holy Ghost.

The second petition is that the Holy Ghost will visit us. It is true that He dwells in us now, but His indwelling here below is only temporary and depends upon ourselves, and is, therefore, more of the nature of a visit than of a permanent abode such as it will be in heaven. His coming to us by actual grace is still more of the nature of a visit, for it consists in a passing enlightenment of the understanding and excitement of the will. These visits honour, rejoice and enrich us, and each of them is worth heaven. Therefore let us implore Him, frequently and urgently, to visit us, let us receive Him with all honour and joy when He does come. Such visits, which unite us so closely to Him, are precious beyond all calculation, and are the

¹ See chap. i.

motive of this petition: "Visit the hearts that Thou hast created—the hearts of those who are Thine".

The third petition is that He will fill our hearts with His Presence and with His operations. In truth He does fill us with His Person and divinity, as well as with His operations. By sanctifying grace He fills the substance of our soul, He fills our faculties by the virtues and gifts, and our whole life and actions by His gifts and by His actual graces. He fills us as His creatures, His instruments and His living temples. Nevertheless, this does not prevent our being more and more filled with Him, or increasing in grace, virtue and merit by a further communication of the Divine Spirit. We confess Him to be the Author of all good things, and pray Him to add grace to grace, merit to merit from the inexhaustible treasury of His sanctity and love. He gives all things richly to those who pray to Him with confidence.

SECOND STANZA.

The nature and activity of the Holy Ghost are put before us in this stanza under two titles and several figures.

1. *Qui diceris Paraclitus.*

The first title by which He is addressed is Paraclete—Comforter! Our Lord Himself gave the Holy Ghost this name. When, after the Last Supper, He spoke to the Apostles about leaving them, they were sad and overcome, and He, to comfort them, gave them the promise of another Paraclete, a Comforter, a Helper, namely, the Holy Ghost. The promised Comforter, being His Spirit, would be like unto Him and equal to Him; and, more than this, His coming would, in some respects, be of greater advantage to the Apostles, because

not only would He never leave them, but He would be in them to teach and enlighten them interiorly. The Holy Ghost would be to the Apostles all that our Lord had been; and would call to their minds all that their Divine Master had taught them, and would, moreover, put before them the hidden meaning of what they had learned from our Lord, and complete and conclude what it comprised. He would remain with them in their difficult work of reclaiming the world from unbelief; He would comfort them in tribulation and persecution by giving them unalterable peace and joy, by helping them to pray aright, by guaranteeing the granting of their prayers, and by giving them a sure hope of heaven. All this was promised and came to pass.¹ What help is there like that of the Holy Ghost!

He was all this to the Apostles, and He will be the same to us. He will be our Guardian, our Teacher, our Counsellor, our Educator.² Our Lord gave the Holy Ghost not to the Apostles only, but to the Church. Let us, therefore, take courage and place all our confidence in Him. Let us seek His counsel in everything, and follow His inspirations and admonitions.

2. *Altissimi donum Dei.*

The second name by which the Holy Ghost is addressed is the Gift or Pledge. This is a name peculiar to the Holy Ghost which manifests His relation to the other two Divine Persons, His nature and origin, and also His relation to creatures. A gift or pledge is at once a proof and effect of love, whereby those who love show their mutual affection, and communicate it reciprocally. The Holy Ghost proceeds from the mutual love of the Father and Son, and is Their common gift and

¹ See chap. xlviii.

² See chap. xxxiv.

pledge containing Their being and life, and, consequently, most actually binding Them together. This is why the Holy Ghost is the Gift of God to the creature, and the prototype, principle and point of departure of all other gifts.¹ The Father and Son love us so much that, not being content to give us any created pledge of Their love, They give us the Holy Ghost Himself. He is the supreme Gift of God to man, in that He is given to us not only in His operations, but in His Person.²

If the Holy Ghost Himself be given to us there must be given with Him honour, joy and other supernatural advantages, and the fulness of divinely good things. By the communication of the Holy Ghost the image of the Blessed Trinity is stamped and sealed on us; and the supernatural life here below becomes a fitting preparation for the state of glory. A dignity above all dignities is conferred on us, we become living temples of the Holy Ghost, and possess Him even here as the pledge of everlasting happiness. All our good works receive a new brilliancy and a peculiar dignity which make them pleasing to God. We have no longer need to seek God outside ourselves, for we can find and enjoy Him in our own hearts. Surely we have here sufficient motives to rejoice in the Holy Ghost, to thank Him, to love Him as the most priceless of treasures, and to take all possible care never to lose Him!

3. *Fons vivus, ignis, charitas.* 4. *Et spiritalis unctio.*

The three figures under which the Holy Ghost is here presented to us are water, flame and oil.

Water, gushing forth with power from its source, with its purifying, refreshing and fructifying properties, is a striking figure of the procession of the Holy

¹ See chap. ii.

² See chap. xxxvi.

Ghost by love,¹ and of His sanctifying and quickening effects on the creature. In like manner flame, which rises up from the fire like a glowing breath, which does not wash, but burns out all impurity, which gives warmth to all things, and which affords light by its glow, is a striking figure of the love which is revealed in the procession of the Holy Ghost, who, shining forth from the Godhead, kindles and seizes hold of the hearts of men. Again, oil with its softness and healing properties is a favourite figure with the Fathers whereby to express the procession of the Holy Ghost and the peculiarity of His life in the Godhead, as the "oil of joy and gladness," and the soothing, strengthening and consecrating effect of His presence on the creature.

Under these various figures the Holy Ghost is shown as being full of goodness towards us. First, His nature, origin and attributes are manifested by them; and secondly, the material signs are made into the actual instruments of His supernatural operations in us through the sacraments and sacramentals; water and oil being the outward signs of no less than four of the sacraments. The Son makes Himself our food, while the Holy Ghost refreshes our souls by water and by unction.² Fire and water are, in a sense, contained in oil, which has, therefore, an affinity to both these elements.³

THIRD STANZA.

In this stanza the nature and operations of the Holy Ghost are again presented to us from four points of view.

1. *Tu septiformis munere.*

The seven Gifts of the Holy Ghost are obviously alluded to in these words. Their nature and meaning

¹ John vii. 38; iv. 14.

² 1 John ii. 27.

³ See chap. viii.

have been described in the fifth stanza of the *Veni Sancte Spiritus*.

2. *Digitus paternæ dexteræ.*

The Finger of God and the Finger of the right hand of God are names given most significantly and descriptively to the Holy Ghost. In the first place the figure points to His unity with the Son, who is the right hand of the Father, and, through the Son, it points to His unity with the Father. Secondly, it points to His being the last Person, numerically, of the Blessed Trinity, and, therefore, in the nearest relation to the creature; for the Finger touches the creature immediately, and communicates to him the action of the other Persons. Thirdly, the figure indicates the peculiar manner of the operations of the Holy Ghost, which penetrate the creature,¹ guide him and govern him externally by the law,² write it in his heart,³ work miracles,⁴ adorn⁵ and set the last seal on perfection.⁶

Let us put ourselves under the control of this mighty and skilful Finger of God, and be held, led and fashioned by it. We give ourselves over to the power of the Holy Ghost by prayer and submission to His will and guidance. He will most certainly make us into something pleasing to God.

3. *Tu rite promissum Patris.*

The Holy Ghost is, in very truth, the promise of the Father. To the Father the divine counsels are to be especially ascribed. The Missions of the Son and of the Holy Ghost belong to the counsels of the Father; and, as the Mission of the Holy Ghost completes that of the Son, it consequently completes likewise the promise of the Father.

¹ Mark vii. 33.

² Deut. ix. 10.

³ Heb. viii. 10.

⁴ Luke xi. 20.

⁵ Ps. viii. 4.

⁶ See chaps. x. and xxxiv.

The Holy Ghost completes the Mission of the Son. First, by the entire revelation of truth. He is called the Spirit of truth,¹ namely, entire, simple and unlimited truth. He completed revelation by fixing its contents, by giving to the Apostles an interior and profound understanding of it, and by bringing home the truth not only to their understanding, but to their hearts. On this account the communication of the truth by the Spirit is called a suggestion, an inspiration, in other words a confidential and winning inducement which excites the will. Secondly, the Holy Ghost completes the Mission of the Son by the communication to man of grace and the divine life. He communicates this life in its fulness to the sanctified man by giving Himself in Person as uncreated grace. Thirdly, the Mission of the Son is completed by the Holy Ghost by His gift of life and activity to the Church, which was founded by our Lord to be the living instrument of truth and grace, by His protection, guidance and government of her and by her endowment with divine powers. Thus is the whole idea of the Mission of the Son realised by the Holy Ghost. This explains our Lord's words when He said to the Apostles that it was expedient for them that He should leave them, for that if He did not go the Holy Ghost would not come to them;² and it explains also why He simply called the Spirit the "promise of the Father".³

All this is calculated to increase in us our veneration of and confidence in the Holy Ghost, as also our longing to be with Him, so that our life also may be completed and perfected by Him.

4. *Sermone ditans guttura.*

These words refer to those gratuitous graces and supernatural powers, either transitory or permanent,

¹ John xvi. 13.

² John xvi. 7.

³ Acts i. 4.

which are given to some for the good of others and of the Church. These graces refer equally to the requirements of the interior and exterior life of the Christian people. Some of them relate to the understanding, namely, those graces which are required for the communication, propagation and confirmation of the faith, such as the word of understanding and knowledge and the gift of miracles. Other gifts relate to the will by edifying, moving and consoling, and to this class belong prophecy and the discernment of spirits. Again, other gifts, like those of tongues and the interpretation thereof, are intended to convince and confound unbelievers.¹

The Holy Ghost is pre-eminently the Author and Principle of these gifts. St. Paul appears to insist strongly on this.² With the Descent of the Holy Ghost these gifts began to be manifested in the Church, as we see in the Book of the Acts of the Apostles; and the mysterious revelations and manifestations belong peculiarly to the Holy Ghost. As love, He not only infuses truth into the heart of him on whom He bestows His gifts, but moves him to publish this truth abroad. This is why He appeared under the form of tongues of fire. The tongue is that organ by which truth is propagated and conveyed from the bosom of the Godhead to the creature; and this tongue is of fire, because it brings the truth home not only to the understanding, but also to the will, and incites those who receive the truth to propagate it, giving them, at the same time, the power thereto.

All this reveals to us the power and goodness of the Holy Ghost. Through His gratuitous graces He has furthered the propagation of the faith and of the Church, and by them He continues to this day, in greater and lesser measure, to reveal His operations

¹ See chap. xx.

² I Cor. xii. 4, 11; xiv. 2.

through the teaching-office and the life of the Church. Spiritual conferences become wonderfully practical and useful when the Holy Ghost blesses them with a share of these gifts.

FOURTH STANZA.

The influence of the Holy Ghost embraces the whole of man, his body, soul, understanding and will. This action of the Holy Ghost is both described and asked for in this fourth stanza.

1. *Accende lumen sensibus.*

Evidently in this stanza the faculty of man's understanding is alluded to, inasmuch as its object is supernatural truth, and consequently, faith which is like the light of man's soul.

The Holy Ghost contributes in two ways to giving us this light. Exteriorly, He keeps intact the deposit of faith left to the Church by Scripture and Tradition. He watches over this deposit and sees that it is infallibly dispensed by the teaching-office of the Church and ever more clearly explained and expounded, for which object He often confers His gratuitous graces as an extraordinary confirmation of its authority. The organs of the Church's teaching-office are organs of faith and are instruments of the Holy Ghost. By Him and Him alone does the light of faith burn brightly and truly in the soul of man.

Interiorly, the Holy Ghost enables man to believe without too great difficulty: first, by the virtue of faith; secondly, by those of His gifts which relate to the intellect, namely, those of understanding, knowledge and wisdom; thirdly, by the influence of actual grace which affects the powers of the soul, and, by communicating to them a physico-spiritual energy, raises them to a new and higher life.

The work of the Holy Ghost is truly wonderful! He has created and given life to a whole system of powers and institutions whereby the light of faith may be communicated to us. His natural creations, the end of which is to give us material light and the natural light of reason, are not to be compared with His creations of the supernatural order. Let us, therefore, thank Him from our hearts. He is the true Teacher of faith. By the various virtues which we have enumerated in another place He quickens and strengthens both our speculative and our practical reason, and directs the whole of our spiritual life. We cannot beg Him too humbly or too often to give us an increase of this light of faith, and we must yield ourselves to His teaching and guidance.¹

2. *Infunde amorem cordibus.*

Our will needs only charity to be what it should. By charity is to be understood the supernatural love of God and of our neighbour—the love of God above all things for His own sake, and the love of our neighbour and of all besides for God's sake. First, charity sets the will in order, for it loves God first and the rest after Him. Secondly, it gives it constancy, for love is the principal power of the will, and the love of which we speak here rests on the most immovable foundations. Thirdly, charity gives to it a zeal for good works, for love is always active, and must always give and suffer, and is fed in its aspirations by joy. Practically, it is most important to have a filial spirit, the spirit of true piety, and this spirit is an effect of charity; in its strength man embraces God and all that belongs to Him with a trustful and benevolent heart. Thus all things become easy; for charity is everything to man.

¹ See chap. xxxiv.

After all that has been said it will be unnecessary to dilate on the relation of the Holy Ghost to charity,¹ for He is charity and the principle of it in our hearts.² He helps the virtue of charity by His Gifts of wisdom and piety,³ infusing by the last a childlike disposition towards God and man: "You have received the Spirit of adoption whereby we cry: Abba, Father".⁴ The Spirit beholds all things with the eyes of charity and judges from its standpoint (*caritative*). This is the most sublime, and, indeed, the only just point of view in judging and acting. If we judge from this standpoint we shall always choose what is most excellent and perfect.

We must, therefore, take pains to refer everything to charity, to judge according to its dictates and fill our hearts with it. The Holy Ghost will help us to do this if, that is to say, we pray untiringly for an increase of charity. We cannot fail to see the importance of never entering on any serious or decisive business without reciting the *Veni Creator* as an invocation of the Holy Ghost. The Spirit of faith and charity can alone solve the problems of life.

3. *Infirma nostri corporis.* 4. *Virtute firmans perpeti.*

The infirmities of our bodies are numerous. According to Scripture the body or the flesh is feeble, frail and base, and, as a consequence of original sin, it is corrupt, works against God and is opposed to Him. In a word, the corruption of sin is implied by the word flesh.⁵ The body becomes exhausted by labour, it weighs down the soul by its many necessities, it depresses the spiritual life and lowers it by making it slothful in prayer, self-conquest and great undertakings; it sets many temptations and occasions of

¹ See chaps. xxiii. and xxiv.

² Rom. v. 5.

³ See chaps. xxviii. and xxxii.

⁴ Rom. viii. 15; Gal. iv. 6.

⁵ Gal. v. 13, 17, 19.

sin before the soul, it incurs a variety of infirmities, and, lastly, it dies and returns to dust.

But the Holy Ghost comes to our assistance against these physical infirmities, and seeks to heal them. He does this primarily by the power of the sacraments of which five, at least, extend their effects to the body, giving it a special share in the sacramental grace. These five are Baptism, Confirmation, Extreme Unction, Holy Communion and Holy Order. By prayer, self-conquest and actual grace He combats whatever weighs down the body and makes it fight against the Spirit of God, and He often makes it capable of extraordinary undertakings in the practice of virtue, in acts of external mortification, in hardships undergone for the salvation of souls and in other things of which we can read in the lives of the saints. The Holy Ghost often causes one of the sacraments, Extreme Unction, to be incidentally efficacious for the restoration of health to the body, and cases in which sickness has been thus removed are innumerable. Finally, by granting us a glorious resurrection, the Holy Ghost will once and for ever remove all the infirmities of the body.¹

Even as a mother provides with loving care for all the needs of her child, so does the Holy Ghost perceive and provide for all the necessities of our soul and body. To no one may we turn with greater confidence than to Him.

FIFTH STANZA.

1. *Hostem repellas longius.* 2. *Pacemque dones protinus.* 3. *Ductore sic te previo.* 4. *Vitemus omne noxium.*

The love of the Holy Ghost not only encompasses the soul of man with His grace, but also takes his

¹ See chap. xlii.

exterior life under His gracious protection and makes Himself our Leader and Guide along its paths. This stanza is at once an explanation of and a petition for this operation of the Holy Ghost.

The Holy Ghost is really our Leader and Guide. He proceeds from love ; and because of this, and because love is the chief power of the will, the gift of life and the direction of the creature towards its end belong in an especial manner to Him. This does not apply only to the individual, but also to all humanity and to the Church. He is the "good Spirit who leadeth into the right land".¹ The Office and prayers for the octave of Pentecost often refer to this guidance of the Holy Ghost.

We must now consider in what way the Holy Ghost conducts us. First, He leads us with certainty and steadfastness. No pilot knows the way and the end as He does, for He is of Himself wisdom and providence. We are created by His wisdom and led by His providence. Under this last term we must place direction through obedience to superiors and the help afforded by the Gift of counsel. Secondly, the Holy Ghost leads and guides us with power by protecting us against our enemies and by frustrating their designs. These enemies of ours are partly visible and partly invisible, partly our own personal enemies and partly the enemies of the Church and of the society to which we belong. The Holy Ghost is our protection against these, because, being the God of peace, "He destroys the bow and breaks the weapons, and burns the shield in the fire".² He creates peace, as says the forty-seventh Psalm, which is used in the Office of Pentecost, and in which we find these words : "He is God, our God unto eternity, for ever and ever. He shall rule us for ever more."³ Thirdly, He rules us sweetly. He either turns aside our exterior trials,

¹ Ps. cxlii. 10.

² Ps. xlv. 10.

³ Ps. xlvii. 15.

or else He gives us interior peace and fortitude which enable us to overcome them. While fear and confusion are raging without, the Church, the City of God, and the hearts of the faithful who dwell within, rest in peace and are girt about with joy. How often have we not witnessed His visible protection of the Church! ¹ When, of old, Peter's little bark was tossed about on the waves the stormy wind was changed into a gentle zephyr, and the bark presently reached the haven.²

If, therefore, we desire to be safe and to avoid all dangers let us take the Holy Ghost as our Pilot and Guide, and let us trust ourselves unreservedly to Him.

SIXTH STANZA.

In this stanza the heart is lifted up to God with an earnest prayer to the Holy Ghost to grant us all that is most sublime in the spiritual life, namely, faith in and love of the Blessed Trinity.

1. *Per te sciamus da Patrem.*

We first pray the Holy Ghost to teach us to know the Father. We learn to know Him first by faith, and, secondly and more perfectly, by a spirit of filial love. Filial love consists in regarding God, not only as our Lord, our Master, our Judge, but as our Father, whom we may approach with confidence, to whose decrees we submit filially, whom we would fain never displease, to whom, finally, we desire to give joy by our good works and zeal for the promotion of His honour and glory. Such is a true knowledge of the Father.

The Holy Ghost alone can communicate to us this priceless knowledge. He has given us faith, He has

¹ See chap. xi.

² John vi. 21.

made us really children of God by sanctifying grace, He Himself dwells in our hearts, and it is He who pours forth this filial love into our souls.¹ "Perfect charity casteth out fear,"² and permits us to call God our Father.³ This filial spirit was kindled within us by the Descent of the Holy Ghost, and is always being renewed in us. It is His work to lead men to the love of God by love.

We must ceaselessly implore the Holy Ghost to give us an increase of this love. God is really our Father and desires to be loved by us as such, for thus is He glorified. As for ourselves, could there be anything better or more meritorious than this filial love?⁴

2. *Noscamus atque Filium.*

The second petition is for knowledge of the Son; and no one can give us this better than the Holy Ghost. He "who searcheth the deep things of God,"⁵ and who proceeds from the Son, knows Him as He is to be known. He it is who endowed the Sacred Humanity of the Son with such wondrous gifts, and made it a masterpiece of grace and nature. He it is who conferred on our Lord His great offices, and guided Him in the exercise of them, in His teaching and in His miracles. He moved the Sacred Heart of Jesus to its intense emotions of compassion, love and adoration; and it was in the love of the Holy Ghost that God made Man consummated His Sacrifice. Again, it is the Holy Ghost who bears testimony to Christ through the Church, and convinces the world of His holiness and divinity, and thereby glorifies Him. The Father draws all things to the Son by the Holy Ghost.⁶

Only the Holy Ghost can give us this knowledge of

¹ Rom. v. 5.

² I John iv. 18.

³ Gal. iv. 6.

⁴ See chap. xxxii.

⁵ I Cor. ii. 10.

⁶ See chap. v.

Jesus Christ and love of Him. May He help us by His grace to understand our Blessed Lord better, to form ourselves on the imitation of Him, so that we may be more powerful instruments for His work. May the Holy Ghost be our Guide and Leader in meditating on the life of our Lord, so that through Him we may be transformed into His image from glory to glory.¹ This is a very important—nay, the most important—grace of the spiritual life. To know Christ and the Father is eternal life :² “He that hath the Son hath life”.³ St. Paul knew of nothing better nor greater than the excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ and His unsearchable riches ;⁴ and to gain it he gave up all things and counted them for loss.

3. *Teque utriusque Spiritum.* 4. *Credamus omni tempore.*

The third petition is for faith in the Holy Spirit ; and this faith is of the highest importance to us. First, it is necessary for salvation : “He that cometh to God must believe that He is”.⁵ The Holy Ghost is God—One of the three Divine Persons in whom, if we desire to be saved, we must believe. Secondly, this faith is very consoling and precious, for the Holy Ghost is worthy of all love. His attributes are goodness and love, and these are revealed to us by faith. Thirdly, faith in Him is very advantageous to us and helpful to our spiritual life ; for the Holy Ghost is the Author and Perfector of it and of all grace. If we have a lively and practical faith in Him it will make us love and honour Him more, and give us, therefore, a greater share in His treasures of grace.⁶

This our faith must have the following qualities. First, it must be firm and immovable—as indeed

¹ 2 Cor. iii. 18.

² John xvii. 3.

³ 1 John v. 12.

⁴ Phil. iii. 8 ; Eph. iii. 8.

⁵ Heb. xi. 6.

⁶ See chaps. i. and lii.

all faith in God's revelation must be. Secondly, it must be comprehensive. We must believe everything which revelation teaches us about the Holy Ghost—His real divinity, His personality, His procession from the Father and the Son, and His operations in us and in the Church, which is quickened, maintained and governed by Him. Thirdly, this faith must be living and reduced to practice. We must honour, invoke and adore the Holy Ghost, and worship Him truly in our hearts.¹

¹ See chaps. xliii. and xliv.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE GREATEST TESTIMONY TO THE GLORY OF THE HOLY GHOST.

THE glory which belongs to the Holy Ghost is sublime and worthy of God. Heaven and earth sing a canticle of praise in honour of His divinity, and all creatures, in their multiplicity and variety, proclaim the majesty of the Spirit of God to whom they owe everything that they are, and have, and do.

But the greatest, the holiest of all the voices raised to do honour to the Holy Ghost is that of the Eternal Word made flesh. Numerous and most precious are the revelations by which the Divine Redeemer throws light on the divinity of the Spirit. But none of His words on this subject are so comprehensive as those uttered by Him in His last discourse. Let us then (1) study the meaning of His words then uttered; (2) place all His revelations concerning the Holy Ghost in juxtaposition; (3) draw a few conclusions.

1. The last discourse—with the prayer of our Lord which followed it—constitutes His farewell intercourse with His Apostles before He entered on His Passion and Death and began His glorious life. Its chief characteristic is that of intimacy. There were no spies about, no enemies or indifferent bystanders to overhear what He said. He sat in the middle of the small circle of His Apostles. He could speak with them face to face, heart to heart, and nothing prevented the outpouring of the innermost thoughts, feelings and secrets which lay hidden in His soul. A

second characteristic is affection. The Sacred Heart of Jesus had been moved by the celebration of the Pasch, by the washing of His disciples' feet and by the institution of the Blessed Sacrament. He was, as it were, in an ecstasy of love, for even with us the thought of separation stirs up the feelings of the most sacred love which our hearts contain. Love inspired our Lord to give utterance to that most sublime of discourses which was, as it were, His death-song. He had reserved so many things for this last moment, He had still so much to say, so many secrets to communicate, so many directions to give, so many promises to make, so many consolations to administer, so much that had already been said which now required to be reiterated and sealed! The seal which it was our Lord's intention to place on all His previous instructions was the revelation of the Holy Ghost.

2. The revelation of the Holy Ghost which our Lord now made comprises two things: the nature of the Holy Ghost and His operations.

Our Lord testifies clearly, concisely and sublimely to the nature of the Holy Ghost. He is truly divine. He is the Spirit of God whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not nor knoweth Him.¹ He is the Spirit of truth.² He is truth itself. He is the Holy Ghost,³ the Spirit of holiness, both because He sanctifies the creature and unites it to God, and because, by proceeding from love in which holiness consists, He is the Person of love and the purest and most sublime expression of divine goodness and purity.

The Holy Ghost receives the divine nature from the Father and Son as from one principle. Several striking expressions of our Lord's denote the peculiar mode of this procession. In one place He says that the Spirit proceedeth from the Father,⁴ and that the

¹ John xiv, 17. ² *Ibid.* xvi. 13. ³ *Ibid.* xiv. 26. ⁴ *Ibid.* xv. 26.

Father will give and send Him.¹ Then, again, He says that He Himself (the Son) will send Him,² because the Spirit proceeds equally from Him. He is the Spirit of truth, and the Son is Truth and Wisdom. When it is said that the Father sends the Spirit in the name of the Son,³ this does not only mean that He sends Him out of regard for the intercession of the Son, but it means also that in sending Him He is One with the Son in the unity of the divine nature communicated by the Father to the Son. The Son possesses all things that the Father has,⁴ and the Holy Ghost hears the Son⁵ and receives from Him what He shall show.⁶ The Divine Persons can receive nothing from each other save the divine nature. When our Lord says that He will ask for the Holy Ghost for us,⁷ this applies only to His human nature. In attestation of this intercessory and meritorious prayer, and, at the same time, to connect and harmonise the external Mission of the Holy Ghost with His eternal Procession, He was not sent until the Word Incarnate had ascended into heaven and was sitting at the right hand of God.⁸ It was necessary that the work of redemption should be finished before the Holy Ghost came down and communicated to us the graces which it had bought. This is a very sublime revelation of the Holy Ghost. It embraces the whole doctrine of His nature, origin, Person and relation to the other Divine Persons. Never before had our Lord expressed Himself so clearly or profoundly.

As to the action of the Holy Ghost which our Lord describes in the second place, it applies immediately to the Apostles and the Church, and presents, generally, an exact resemblance to the action of the Son. Thenceforward the place of our Blessed Lord was to

¹ John xiv. 16, 26.

⁴ *Ibid.* xvi. 15; xvii. 10.

⁷ *Ibid.* xiv. 16.

² *Ibid.* xv. 26; xvi. 7.

⁵ *Ibid.* xvi. 13.

⁸ *Ibid.* xvi. 7; xvii. 39.

³ *Ibid.* xiv. 26.

⁶ *Ibid.* xvi. 14.

be filled by the Holy Ghost, and for the future He was to be to the Apostles that which their Divine Master had been. Our Lord had been to them a Helper and an Advocate,¹ and this the Holy Ghost was to be thenceforward. This description of the Spirit's attitude towards them was constantly on our Lord's lips.² In some respects the assistance of the Holy Ghost would be more advantageous and beneficial to the Apostles than had been that of Jesus. Our Lord came to them and left them with His visible presence; but the Holy Ghost would remain with them.³ The visible presence of Jesus afforded the Apostles the exterior teaching of word and example; while that of the Holy Ghost was to be in the interior depths of the soul. "He shall be in you," said our Lord.⁴ That which He promised is not a simple presence, but an indwelling; and, moreover, the promise was not confined to the Apostles, but extended to their successors and to the Church of the future in all ages.

Considered in detail, the action of the Holy Ghost corresponds exactly with that of our Lord, who taught and formed the Apostles, was with them in the first trials of their apostolate, and consoled them in the midst of their contradictions. This was what the Holy Ghost would do for them in the future.

In the following words our Lord indicated what the teaching of the Spirit would be: "He will teach you all things, and bring all things to your mind whatsoever I shall have said to you";⁵ "He will teach you all truth, and the things that are to come He shall show you".⁶ The teaching of the Holy Ghost, therefore, confirms the doctrine of Jesus Christ, and continues it; He maintains the old, and adds new things to it; He calls to mind what has been taught, and throws new light on it; He completes and closes the deposit of

¹ I John ii. 1.

² John xiv. 16, 26; xv. 26; xvi. 7.

³ *Ibid.* xiv. 16.

⁴ *Ibid.* xiv. 17.

⁵ *Ibid.* xiv. 26.

⁶ *Ibid.* xvi. 13.

faith, and is for ever enlarging and perfecting the knowledge of this treasure. The teaching of our Lord and that of the Holy Ghost are one and the same, but, in accordance with the will of God and the needs of the Church, it progresses interiorly. Thus, Jesus promised to the Apostles a higher and more perfect knowledge of His divinity through the Holy Ghost. "In that day," says He, "you shall know that I am in My Father, and you in Me and I in you."¹ He speaks here of the time after His Resurrection, so fraught with grace for the Apostles, when they saw His divinity clearly, and were so intimately associated with Him by the charm of their converse with Him. This knowledge and intimacy were sealed by the Descent of the Holy Ghost, by which the Spirit of Jesus really lived in their hearts and kindled within them the glorious light of understanding, so that there was no longer any doubt or uncertainty in their hearts, and no longer any cause for them to ask about the things pertaining to their office. The Holy Ghost also taught them new truths which they could not have borne before.² Many future things,³ such, for instance, as are contained in the Apocalypse, were shown to them, and also the truth of the inspiration of the Books of the New Testament.⁴ The treasury of faith which is contained in Scripture and Tradition has, by the unfailling assistance of the Holy Ghost, been kept safe in the Church, where it abides for the general use of the faithful. The truth and historical accuracy of the Gospels, the exactness of the interpretation of Scripture, the infallibility in the definitions of doctrine by Popes and Councils, the illumination which characterises and will to the end characterise the writings of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church,

¹ John xiv. 20.

² *Ibid.* xvi. 12.

³ Rom. xi. 25; 1 Cor. xv.; 2 Peter iii.; 1 Thess. iv. 15.

⁴ 2 Peter iii. 15; *Trid., Sess. 4, decr. de Can. Scr.*

and the elucidation and development of revealed truth, all this is an effect of the promise and a ray of the teaching of the Holy Ghost.¹

The second way in which the Holy Ghost would assist the Apostles was in carrying out their mission as regards the world. By the world we are in this instance to understand that portion of it which was hostile to Christ and His Church, both Jews or Gentiles. It was necessary that these should be put into such a position as to be able to decide either for or against Christian truth. Our Lord had told the Apostles in forcible words what the assistance of the Holy Ghost in their mission would be: "And when He (the Holy Ghost) is come, He will convince the world of sin and of justice and of judgment. Of sin because they believed not in Me. And of justice because I go to the Father, and you shall see Me no longer. And of judgment because the prince of this world is already judged."² The world, therefore, was to be instructed and convinced by the testimony of the Holy Ghost borne through the Apostles—a testimony at once exterior and interior, theoretical and practical. In the first place the world would be convinced that disbelief in our Lord Jesus Christ was a sin, and that the sin of the world consists in such unbelief, and that, consequently, it was in a state of sin. The Holy Ghost bore this testimony interiorly by the voice of conscience and by experience. The world knows very well that faith is neither absurd in itself nor teaches anything absurd, but that on the contrary it teaches many things which reason cannot reject. Resistance to faith on the plea of reason and civilisation paralyses the powers, and involves him who makes it in contradictions with himself and with conscience. The world also knows that faith in Jesus Christ has drawn multitudes from sin

¹ See chap. xiii.

² John xvi. 8-11.

and has made them into saints, whereas it is of itself powerless to convert one sinner. Far from doing this it produces monsters of crime, and is itself engulfed in an abyss of iniquity. The effects of faith in Christ prove the world to be the kingdom of sin and the Church the kingdom of the Holy Ghost. It is only by clinging to our Lord Jesus Christ by faith that we can be saved from sin.

The second thing of which the Holy Ghost will convince the world is that there is justice, that this justice is in Christ, and that He Himself is this justice, because He has gone to the Father to dwell for ever with Him. The Apostles bore witness to the Resurrection and Ascension, and sealed their testimony with their blood. The Descent of the Holy Ghost, sent by our Lord, the existence and indestructibility of the Church, her preaching according to conscience and justice, all these proclaim that Jesus Christ is not the sinner as which the world condemned Him and put Him to death. On the contrary, it is the world which is unjust and a deicide; and it is only by faith in Jesus Christ that it can obtain justice and holiness.

In the third place the Holy Ghost convinces the world of judgment. He convinces it that injustice draws down judgment on it, because, as a matter of fact, the prince of this world is already judged. The judgment of Satan took place by the death of our Lord,¹ when his power over those who elected to believe in Jesus Christ was broken, those only remaining under his thralldom who freely give themselves over to be his slaves. The living fact which attests to this judgment of Satan is the Church, which, though her Founder is dead, exists and spreads in such a manner that the world, in spite of all its efforts, cannot destroy her. The judgment of the world began with the judgment of Satan, and is constantly being re-

¹ John xii. 31.

vealed, interiorly by fear and the sting of conscience, and exteriorly by the futility of all attempts against the kingdom of Christ, and by the startling chastisements which have at times overtaken the greater instruments of the world's satanic hatred of the Church. These chastisements are but the precursors of the general judgment, when the irrevocable sentence will be pronounced.

In this threefold testimony consists the teaching given by the Holy Ghost to the world. "The world is laden with sin and devoid of justice: therefore judgment overtakes it. Wilful unbelief, the reprobation and condemnation of the just, perversion of judgment, these three burdens, one weightier than the other, oppress the world's conscience. This is the threefold lesson, simultaneous and not to be divided into three acts. The demonstrations mingle with and penetrate each other, one truth calls out to the other, proofs cross each other and unite, as in a storm lightning flashes here and there, and the flashes cross each other and become confused in one great conflagration. It is true that one flash is stronger at one time, another at another time, but the revelation of the Spirit never fails entirely in the dark heavens of the universe, and its flashes will never be quite absent from the history of mankind. The history of the Church is really that of the judgment of the world."¹

In this way the Holy Ghost bears testimony in the world and to the world, the organs of His testimony being the Apostles and the Church, whose own testimony is united to that of the Holy Ghost. Therefore our Lord says: "The Spirit of truth shall give testimony of Me, and you shall give testimony of Me because you are with Me from the beginning".² The

¹ *Unseres Herrn Trost*, by Bishop Keppler, whose ideas we have borrowed.

² John xv. 26, 27.

personal witness afforded by the experience of the Apostles owed its infallibility to the supernatural assistance of the Holy Ghost. This great testimony borne by Him through the medium of the Apostles and Church has for its immediate end the glorifying of Christ. Even as the work of the Son was to glorify the Father,¹ so is it the object of the Holy Ghost to glorify the Son.² As a matter of fact, the world is being continually convinced of the justice, holiness and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of His authority as Saviour and Judge, by the power attached to the preaching of the faith, by the efficacy of the means of grace instituted by Him, by the miracles and miraculous gifts, by the marvellous extension of the Church, and by the sanctification of souls. The happiness of the blessed is the summit and crown of the work of God made Man, because by His merits He is the Author of beatitude as well as of the Church and of grace. The Holy Ghost's work is to put the crown on the merits of Jesus Christ.

The third way in which the Holy Ghost would assist the Apostles was by consolation. They stood in sore need of it, not only on account of the difficulties of their vocation, but especially on account of the persecutions and sufferings which they had to endure at the hands of the world. Our Lord did not conceal from them the trials which were to come; on the contrary, never had He spoken more clearly about their future tribulations than He did on this occasion.³ But, on the other hand, He put before them most powerful motives of consolation, drawn, for the most part, from the coming of the Holy Ghost. Their first consolation is that they should have peace. "My peace I leave with you," says our Lord, "My peace I give unto you: not as the world

¹ John xvii. 1, 4.

² *Ibid.* xvi. 14.

³ *Ibid.* xv. 18-27; xvi. 1-4.

giveth do I give unto you.”¹ This peace, then, was not such as the world possesses and gives, powerless and shadowy, frail and deceptive, but peace such as He Himself possessed, a true, lasting and solid peace, which proceeded from His unity with the Father and the Holy Ghost. This peace is, in fact, the Holy Ghost Himself, for He is love and was given to the Apostles on the Day of Pentecost. Secondly, the consolation promised by our Lord consisted in joy: “Amen, amen, I say to you that you shall lament and weep . . . but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. . . . I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man shall take from you.”² This their joy was to begin when they saw their Lord again after His Resurrection, and was to be made complete and permanent on the Day of Pentecost. Even as the Holy Ghost is unalterable and substantial peace, so also is He joy, because He is love. After the Descent of the Holy Ghost the Apostles had no more need to ask any questions, and, moreover, their prayer was so powerful that it required no special assistance from their Master.³ They possessed in themselves the fountain of all truth and power, namely, the Holy Ghost. Their souls were so flooded with light that questions and parables were thenceforward superfluous. The Spirit spoke directly to their spirit, and spoke to them of the Father, the Divine Source of all revelation. Moreover, their union with their Lord and Master Jesus Christ was completed by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost; a peculiar power was given to their prayer, which was, in the highest sense of the word, offered “in the name of Jesus,” and could not fail to obtain a hearing. Sent up in this power of Christ it needed no further recommendation. Is not this the perfection of joy?

The joy of the Apostles was completed by the

¹ John xiv. 27.

² *Ibid.* xvi. 20, 22.

³ *Ibid.* xvi. 23-27.

harmony and charity which reigned among the faithful in the first days of the Church. Not only, according to our Lord's words, were the Apostles to be one with the Father and Son even as They are one,¹ in such a way that they might have His joy in themselves,² but the faithful were to be drawn into the same unity³ and joy. The Church manifests this glorious unity, the soul, principle and bond of which is the Holy Ghost. "That the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them and I in them."⁴ Such were the words of our Lord's prayer. The Father and Son are one and love one another in the Holy Ghost, and in like manner the faithful were to be one among themselves and one with the Father and Son in the same Spirit, who is the Bond of peace⁵ and the one Spirit in the one body:⁶ "In this we know that we abide in Him and He in us; because He hath given us of His Spirit".⁷

This then is the assistance which our Lord promised that His Apostles should receive from the Holy Ghost. He would be their Helper and Advocate, equal in power to Him who sent Him; and—in the eternal counsels of God—would take up our Lord's work as regarded the Apostles and the Church, and would complete and perfect it. By a few words in His last prayer our Lord expressed what the Mission of the Spirit would be: "Sanctify them in truth".⁸ By this gift for which He asked His Father, our Lord did not mean merely the personal sanctity of His Apostles, but also the gift of sanctifying others. Their vocation was to be the same as that of their Master, and they were to be prophets, priests and kings;⁹ being armed for this their apostolic vocation by the Descent of the Holy Ghost, which

¹ John xvii. 11.

⁴ *Ibid.* xvii. 26.

⁷ 1 John iv. 13.

² *Ibid.* xvii. 13.

⁵ Eph. iv. 3.

⁸ John xvii. 17.

³ *Ibid.* xvii. 21.

⁶ *Ibid.* iv. 4.

⁹ Mark i. 24; John x. 36.

was the fruit of the Sacrifice on the Cross.¹ Then were they "sanctified in truth" for their vocation, not only by virtues and gifts whereby to consecrate their office, but by the communication of the Holy Spirit Himself. He is the Spirit of truth and holiness, and is the Principle of every ministry and of all authority. It was in this sense that our Lord spoke when He said: "It is expedient to you that I go, for if I go not the Paraclete will not come to you".² In sending the Holy Ghost our Lord fulfilled His intention in the most striking manner as regarded the Apostles and the early Church. In all the difficulties belonging to their vocation they rejoiced in the illumination and guidance of the Holy Ghost,³ and they preached with confidence the word of faith to both Jews and Gentiles.⁴ Heaven answered their prayers and gave them the gift of astounding miracles.⁵ In all their persecutions and tribulations the consolations of the Holy Ghost inundated their souls,⁶ and they were filled with the sweetness and encouragement of mutual charity.⁷ The early Church bore on her the unmistakable stamp of the image of the Holy Ghost, and was a living realisation of the great promise of our Lord Jesus Christ.

3. Such is the testimony which our Lord bore to the Holy Ghost in His last discourse. First of all, it was a testimony of the utmost importance, because it was borne by neither Pope, Council, prophet nor angel, but by the lips of the Eternal Truth Himself. It is also most important on account of its comprehensiveness; for by it all the truths which we have to believe concerning the Holy Ghost are both enunciated and proved. All doctrines relating to the Holy Ghost, the

¹ John xvii. 19.

² *Ibid.* xvi. 7.

³ Acts xv. 28.

⁴ *Ibid.* ii. 15; iv. 31; xix. 8.

⁵ *Ibid.* iii. 6; v. 19; ix. 40; xii. 5; xvi. 25.

⁶ *Ibid.* iv. 31; v. 41; xiii. 52.

⁷ *Ibid.* iv. 32.

confessions of the Church and the opinions of theologians are based on our Lord's words in this portion of revelation.

Secondly, the testimony is most sublime and does great honour to the Holy Ghost ; for it sets Him before us in a position the heights and depths of which are beyond us, and shows us what He is in the Godhead and what He is towards creatures. Everywhere is He set forth as the last word, as the consummation, the Principle of movement and our Guide to our last end. By His divinity and grace He penetrates all things ; He is the Source of life, love, joy and power. No earthly scale, no earthly thought can measure the profundity and sublimity of the testimony borne to the Holy Ghost by the Word Incarnate. In heaven, to understand it will be a part of our beatitude.

The testimony is, furthermore, most tender and moving, not only because it manifests the Holy Ghost in the most consoling and winning aspect as our Help and Comforter here below, but because it contains practically our Lord's last words, and because these last words are devoted to the Holy Ghost. Look at it which way we will our Lord's last discourse leads us back again and again to the Holy Ghost. Indeed, when the Divine Saviour in His parting words reveals the inner life of the Blessed Trinity to us, He points again and again to the Holy Spirit. When He gives His Apostles His farewell admonition to be united to one another in faith, charity and prayer, it is the Holy Ghost who is the bond of love, and it is His indwelling which gives prayer its efficacy. When He consoles them for His departure and tells them of the persecutions which were to follow, it is the Holy Ghost whom He promises to them as their Comforter. When, finally, He prays for oneness of the faithful with Himself and the Father, it is the Holy Ghost who forms this unity. In

truth the Holy Ghost is our Blessed Lord's last word, and what does it say to us? Does it not tell us how very important it is to have a true devotion to the Holy Ghost, whereby to fulfil the last and dearest desire of the Sacred Heart?

CHAPTER XLIX.

THE BEST SORT OF WORSHIP.

THE best way to worship the Holy Ghost is to follow His guidance. Let us consider: (1) what is the meaning of following the Holy Ghost's guidance; (2) what motives we have for doing so; (3) what means will best help us to do so.

1. What, then, is the meaning of following the guidance of the Holy Ghost? It means obedience to the interior light which He gives us, whereby to work out our salvation and advance to perfection. He gives us this interior light by means of what we call illuminations and inspirations. Therefore, to follow His guidance means to receive and obey His inspirations.

But what are we to understand by His inspirations? Are we to accept all our interior impulses as coming from the Holy Ghost? Most certainly not. Those inspirations only are from the Holy Ghost which, to begin with, are in no way contrary to either faith or morals. Anything contrary to these could not possibly come from the Holy Ghost who is the Principle of both faith and morals. Further, nothing can proceed from Him which is contrary to obedience to lawful superiors. Even if we are convinced that an inspiration is from God, we may not act on it if it is in opposition to our superiors. We must trust to the guidance of obedience in preference to that of our own uncertain perceptions, and we should be firmly convinced that, if the will of God is really in accordance with our inspira-

tions, He will find the means of moving our superiors to agree to them. Meanwhile our duty is to obey. Again, as a rule, those inspirations which counsel an action contrary to the ordinary ways of the Church do not come from the Holy Ghost; for we are bound to hold that the manner of thought and action generally acknowledged by the Church is an effect of faith and morals and is not to be deviated from without good reason. The same rule holds good when applied to the duties of each one's state. They are God's revealed will in regard to us, and we have no right to act in opposition to them by reason of any private inspiration. Nothing which would hinder us in the fulfilment of the duties of our state can come from the Holy Ghost.¹

The first mark of an inspiration being divine is, therefore, that its object be good and in accordance with the revealed will of God. Let us add that it is not enough that the object be good, for it must be entirely and lastingly good. Let us suppose, for instance, that in the beginning the object of an inspiration is very good and even perfect, but that in its development it departs from its first ideal, and its counsels become less good. In this case we could have no certainty that it came from the Holy Ghost, and the greatest prudence would be required to prevent it from leading to error. But if the interior impulse remain good throughout, and its effects remain good and tend to perfection, we may be sure that it comes from God. It is also necessary to pay attention to the manner in which the inspiration reveals itself. If it happen that, though we have good

¹ In this way and in no other can the true interior guidance of the Holy Ghost be discerned. The opinion that there is a certain interior guidance of the Holy Ghost, which makes the exterior teaching of the Church unnecessary or superfluous, was condemned in the Encyclical of Leo XIII. of 2nd January, 1899, on so-called Americanism or Heckerism.

reason to hope that we are in a state of grace and friendship with God, the inspiration brings lasting confusion and unrest to our soul, then it is certain that it is not the Holy Ghost who is inspiring us, but either our own passions or the enemy of souls, who is the spirit of restlessness and confusion; for the Holy Ghost is, on the contrary, the Spirit of lucidity, calm and peace. What has been said will help us to discern true from false inspirations. In obedience to those inspirations that are followed in harmony with the principles laid down here there can be no danger of anything insidious or heretical, for we submit our private judgment to the sure rule of faith and obedience.

2. What motives have we for following the guidance of the Holy Ghost? First, it is necessary for us. Left to ourselves we are in a state of darkness, blindness and impotence as regards what is really good for us. As has been said in a previous chapter, without prevenient grace we can do nothing at all. Prevenient graces, with their power of enlightening and exciting, are, in other words, inspirations of the Holy Ghost. If, therefore, we desire to attain to perfection we must obey these. We are full of inordinate desires, inclinations and attachments to forbidden and dangerous things, and of useless thoughts and designs. Who will discover to us the impurity of our hearts, and free us from what is evil? The natural light of reason is not sufficient. Without the supernatural illumination of the Holy Ghost we should remain all our lives captive to our imperfection—partly because we do not see it, partly because we have not the courage and energy to shake ourselves free from it. Without this light from above we are in danger of taking as our standard the opinions and actions of those around us, whose ideals are, as a rule, not high, and are based on the lower aspects of life. But few

attain to perfection, because they have not the courage to obey the inspirations of the Holy Ghost. Even our salvation may be endangered if we do not accustom ourselves to obey them. Who can count the many perils through which we pass in this life? Who can calculate the number of our enemies, or their strength and devices? In their hands everything, whether within us or without, becomes a snare to us. How necessary is it, therefore, for us to have a Guide and Counsellor who will beckon to us where to follow Him! He sees the danger ahead of us, and warns us against it by His inspirations. Who can tell whether we shall succeed in escaping the danger if we do not follow His counsel?

It behoves those especially whose vocation it is to guide others to listen closely to the inspirations of the Holy Ghost. Unless they do so they run the risk of being guided solely by natural prudence, and of putting their own spirit in the place of the Spirit of God, thereby hindering and ruining the souls committed to their charge instead of furthering within them the good things destined for them by God. This is but the too probable effect of over publicity of life and of unrest, dissipation and superficiality in the spiritual life. It comes with some from undue self-appreciation, and, with others, from self-confidence. Nothing is more fatal to spiritual direction than this; and nothing is more necessary to it than a humble inquiry into the intentions of God, and a submission of opinions and decisions to the light of the Holy Ghost.

Secondly, it is but fitting and just that we should obey the Holy Ghost. God has given Him to us to be our Teacher, Comforter, Advocate and Guardian. He is the Spirit of truth and of counsel, and we are referred to Him for these. Therefore we must always hearken unto Him; and if we refuse to do so we labour under a double disadvantage. First, we

withdraw ourselves from His will and providence, whereas there is nothing more natural and obligatory for a creature than subjection to His will. Secondly, we place some creature in the innermost sanctuary of our heart; for if the Holy Spirit does not guide us, some other spirit must do so, and this must be either the spirit of evil or our own human spirit, in both of which cases we prefer a creature and a servant to the Majesty of God.

Thirdly, to follow the guidance of the Holy Ghost is useful and advantageous to us. There is nothing in the spiritual life which can lead us so quickly to perfection as obedience to His inspirations. The practice of certain particular virtues and good works is undoubtedly good and praiseworthy, and we must carry it out faithfully, especially in the beginning, in order to remove difficulties and obtain facility in it. But this is, at best, piecemeal-work, and is the action of a novice in the spiritual life. We obtain perfection more quickly and more fully by endeavouring to follow the divine inspirations. This leads to true interior perfection and sanctity. Our chief object in the practice of particular virtues is to obtain readiness in doing God's will, to unite ourselves to Him, and be one with Him. Such is the glorious end of every endeavour to acquire virtue; and this end we gain by following the guidance of the Holy Ghost. By doing this we do not rest content with practising now one now another virtue; but we practise them in the most perfect manner, namely, with the view of being brought by them into immediate union with God, and entire dependence on Him. Thus little by little our self-will is destroyed, and we rest entirely in God and in His will. It is no more we who live, but God who lives in us. This is, according to St. Paul, the essential mark of the children of God, for, says he, "Whosoever are led by the Spirit of God they are the sons of

God".¹ The spiritual life rests on two corner-stones : the purifying of our hearts from all sin and attachment to creatures, and the uniting of ourselves to God by obedience to His holy inspirations. This is the epitome of the spiritual life. These two points are, as it were, its two poles, and the farther we advance from the one and approach the other, so much the more is the kingdom of God established within us. We cannot try too soon or too earnestly to attain this end ; for our perfection depends on it.

Lastly, obedience to the inspirations of the Holy Ghost gives a great dignity to our spiritual life. Why? Because it implies much courage, constancy, self-denial, generosity and love of God. The path is, undoubtedly, beautiful, grand and secure ; but how is it that we meet with so few travelling along it? It is because men fear to forsake themselves and renounce themselves. They know not what the will of God may yet require of them ; their confidence in Him is not unconditional ; the prospect before them seems dark and horrible, and so they turn back. "This land," they complain, in the words of the Israelites when they came in sight of the Promised Land, "this land devoureth its inhabitants."² And so it happens that they lose heart and abandon the pursuit of perfection. This explains why so few attain to the possession of all the graces prepared for them by God, or recover those which they have lost. They lack the courage either to embark on or to persevere in the way of perfection. We may liken them to travellers among the mountains. All of a sudden the path seems lost ; there is a torrent to the right of them and a precipice to their left, but where is the road? How mad we should consider these travellers if they yielded to panic and turned back, for it is a mere delusion of the senses, and let them take but one

¹ Rom. viii. 14.

² Num. xiii. 33.

step more and they will see the path opening out before them. We must regard our journey in the spiritual life in this light, and never allow ourselves to be frightened and overcome by feelings of mistrust, cowardice or impatience. The Holy Ghost who has called us to follow His guidance is faithful, and will never deceive or forsake us. Only let us have fortitude and courage, and be resolved to follow Him!

3. What are the means by which we can practise this exercise and persevere in it? First, it is necessary to be firmly resolved to follow the guidance of the Holy Ghost in the spiritual life, and never to withdraw ourselves from Him, but to attach ourselves to His direction. This resolution must be often renewed and strengthened by the consideration of the various motives for it. It must, moreover, be the object of our prayers, meditation and examen, and must be always before us when we receive the sacraments.

Secondly, we must often implore the light of the Holy Ghost, and this, especially, when we have any important decision to make or any difficult and intricate work to accomplish. It is, therefore, a good thing to accustom ourselves to invoke Him often throughout the day, and ask for light and strength to obey His inspirations and will in all things. Ask Him that you may not die until you have made good the losses you have sustained by the neglect of His inspirations.

Thirdly, we must be attentive to His impulses and inspirations, and, consequently, we must not let our minds be excessively distracted, nor must we let ourselves be too much addicted to exterior work. What would be the use of the Holy Ghost speaking to us if we do not hear Him? We must, therefore, recollect ourselves frequently during the day, and however we may be occupied, keep our eyes open to see what are

our faults and observe the direction of our inclinations. Those who commit deliberate venial sins, who allow inordinate liberty to their senses, whether interior or exterior, and who do not manifest their consciences to those who are destined to direct them in the place of God, cannot possibly understand the will and intention of the Holy Ghost in their regard. Such failings are like a mist which hides the light of the Holy Ghost from us, and leaves our souls in darkness. These mists must be dispersed before we can see.

Lastly, we must do and carry out whatever the Holy Ghost shows us. In order to do this with greater certainty we must begin by putting into practice those things which we know, which the Holy Ghost has already shown us to be undeniably good and necessary, and which He has probably been asking of us for a long time. It might be the overcoming of some evil passion, the removal of some obstacle, or it might be some real sacrifice. Let us not delude ourselves with the hope that He will show us anything more or anything different until we have done this thing. He will abide by this one demand, and will go no farther; and only by obeying Him in this and by being faithful to what we have already received shall we prepare ourselves to receive further illuminations. Without doubt to do this will require great patience and perseverance; and if the acquiring of one virtue cost so much trouble, how much more arduous will be obedience to this great counsel of perfection? The enemy of souls will do everything he can to make us swerve from such a course, because he knows full well that by following it we shall escape him. But the result will compensate for every trouble. "No one knows," says St. Ignatius more than once, "what God intends to make of us, provided we put no obstacles in the way." One inspiration of the Holy Ghost is of

greater value than the whole of the natural creation. It is a word of the Lord, and what cannot that effect? We can see its power in the lives of the saints. How often with them everything seemed to depend upon one generous resolution, or on the faithful obedience to one impulse of grace. They obeyed, and lo, the road which led to their sanctity opened out before them, and all was made plain. One grace brought others, and the saints ran their course surely and swiftly. This is beautifully described in the Book of Ecclesiasticus: "I bowed down my ear a little and received wisdom . . . I found much wisdom. . . . I have laboured a little and have found much rest to myself." ¹

¹ Ecclus. li. 21, 22, 35.

CHAPTER L.

THE NOVENA OF THE HOLY GHOST.

THE Vesper-bells of the Ascension have rung. We stand in spirit with the disciples on the Mount of Olives and gaze upward, looking in vain for one ray of glory left by the passage of the Lord.¹ He has been taken up to heaven and has vanished from our sight. Nothing remains to be done except to come down from the Mount, and, in obedience to His last instruction, go to the house on Sion, there to await the Promise of the Father, the Holy Ghost. The great days of preparation, the silent vigil of Pentecost, the novena of the Holy Ghost have begun. Let it be our business in this meditation to join in it with fervour; and for this we will: (1) adduce a few motives; and (2) study the best way of making the novena.

1. It is meet and right, and also natural, that we should make a diligent preparation for all the great festivals of the ecclesiastical year. The Church sets us the example in this, for she prescribes to all good Christians the observance of various seasons of preparation. Each of these has its own meaning, beauty and utility; but we may, without exaggeration, maintain that the novena of the Holy Ghost passes all others in importance, because it has a dignity and sanctity peculiarly its own.

Its dignity and sanctity belong to it, in the first place, on account of its Author. We attach a peculiar

¹ Acts i. 11.

value to any devotion if its founder be noted for his sanctity, or in any way especially dear to us. Who was it who introduced the novena for Pentecost? None other than our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. When He took leave of His disciples before the Ascension His parting injunction to them was not to leave Jerusalem till they had received the Promise of the Father, "which, saith He, you have heard by My mouth, for John indeed baptised with water, but you shall be baptised with the Holy Ghost not many days hence".¹ It was His intention that the disciples should prepare for the Coming of the Holy Ghost; and they understood this to be His meaning, and acted accordingly.

It was really and literally the will of our Divine Lord that the disciples should give themselves over to a nine days' devotion. As regards ourselves, the same is His wish, and as such must be both sacred and sweet to us. His desire that we should prepare in this way for the Holy Ghost cannot be less now than it was then, and because we are undertaking this work of preparation at His instigation we may look for a special blessing on it. To make this nine days' prayer may be called, in a peculiar sense, praying in His name.² Let us tell Him, our dear Lord, that we are making this novena because we are moved to do so by His words, and that, counting on them, we expect many blessings from it.

Secondly, the novena for Pentecost has a dignity on account of those who were the first to make it. The Apostles carried out our Lord's directions to the letter. The Book of the Acts tells us that "when they were come in, they went up into an upper room where abode Peter, John and the others. All these were persevering with one mind in prayer with the women, and Mary the Mother of Jesus and with His

¹ Acts i. 4, 5.

² John xvi. 23; Matt. xviii. 20.

brethren." ¹ Let us picture to ourselves in the spirit this august assemblage of prayer. Whom do we behold? The Apostles and the holy Mother of God. Is it not a great honour for us to enter that circle and pray in such company? What an honour to do as they did, and supply their places here below! Is not our confidence justified that a certain power will pass from their prayer to ours, if, that is to say, we unite ourselves to them in spirit?

Thirdly, this novena is possessed of great dignity on account of its object. That object is no less than one of the Divine Persons of the Blessed Trinity—God the Holy Ghost, who is as sublime and adorable in Himself as He is necessary to us, near to us, and benevolent in regard to us. Yet, in spite of all this, how little known, honoured and loved He is! Was it not fitting that men should prepare themselves for the arrival of so great a Guest, who came to honour them by a new kind of presence among them, and to sanctify, rejoice and enrich them with unheard-of treasures and benefits? The world had prepared itself for the Coming of Christ by centuries of desire and prayer. When the Divine Redeemer commanded the disciples to prepare themselves to receive the Promise of the Father, He no doubt intended that the world should in a certain sense do its best to merit the Coming of the Holy Ghost. The world was represented by the Apostles, and in the name of all humanity they stormed heaven and cried out for the Holy Spirit of God.

Surely it is but fitting that we should set apart one season in the ecclesiastical year wherein to worship the Holy Ghost, partly to make up to Him for our negligence in that respect, partly to lay in us the seeds of renewed devotion to Him, which is so just in itself and so important to ourselves; for in this way we may

¹ Acts i. 13, 14.

partake of the fruits of His annual descent into our midst. The world never thinks of doing this, therefore we must do it in its stead and for it.

Lastly, the dignity of the novena comes from the glorious fruits which it produces. It is a devotion more rich in grace than any other. The first fruit which it bears is the coming to us of the Holy Ghost, the Source and Dispenser of all graces. How highly our Lord praised these graces when speaking to His Apostles! What expectation His words awoke in their hearts! When speaking of the Coming of the Holy Ghost He said: "You shall be baptised with the Holy Ghost".¹ Through the Holy Ghost they were to become entirely new creatures. They had been already baptised by our Lord and had thereby become Christians; but as Apostles they had not yet been baptised. This was done by the Holy Ghost. "You shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming on you," said our Lord, "and you shall be witnesses unto Me in Jerusalem and in all Judæa and Samaria, and even to the uttermost part of the earth."² Even as St. John the Baptist baptised with water unto penance so were the Apostles baptised with the fire of the Holy Ghost. In the strength of this baptism of fire they cast off all the frailties and weaknesses of human nature, and came out of it new men, giants of strength and courage, true Apostles to the world, whose voices should sound even unto the uttermost ends of the earth.

The product of that novena was a new race of the faithful, united in one faith, one love. We can never sufficiently admire the humility, patience and generosity of those first-fruits of Christianity. From that novena there proceeded, in a word, the whole Church, with her glorious powers and organisation, her wonderful gifts of grace, her history and her

¹ Acts i. 5.

² *Ibid.*⁶i. 8.

creative thought. Our Lord's words connected the beginning of His kingdom—so impatiently looked for by the Apostles—with the outpouring of the Holy Ghost.¹ And all this proceeded from that upper chamber, which was, as it were, the womb of the Church. Pentecost was the hour of her birth, and the novena was the time of preparation during which the glorious fruit ripened. What do not we Christians owe to that novena? Our Lord called the Gift which it brought to us the “power from on high” and “the Promise of the Father”.² By the Descent of the Holy Ghost was fulfilled that which God, “the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort,”³ had designed for us, and had promised us by the prophets and by our Lord Himself. We were orphans who found in the Church a home, and in the Holy Ghost a Comforter and Guardian who will not be taken from us. The Holy Ghost is the seal of all the favours of heaven, and the crown and completion of all the communications of God.

If we consider the promises which our Lord made to the Apostles as an inducement to make the novena with fervour, what fruits, what blessed results may we not hope to reap from it? The disciples emerged from making it the Apostles of the world; and why should it not make of us fervent Christians, priests or religious? The hand of the Lord is not shortened, and He gives us Pentecost every year to enable us to drink to the full of the living and inexhaustible treasures which flow from it. Let us do our part, and make the novena with all possible fervour. This is the best way to express our good-will, and we may be sure that God will bless it.

2. What is the best way of making this all-important novena? Fortunately the manner is not left to our own judgment; and we find in the Book of the Acts our

¹ Acts i. 7, 8.

² Luke xxiv. 49; Acts i. 4.

³ 2 Cor. i. 3.

Lord's own instructions on the subject. There is no better method of preparation for the Holy Ghost than that indicated by Him. "Stay in the city," said He,¹ and to this Scripture adds the statement that "when they were come in they went into an upper room where they abode . . . and all these were persevering with one mind in prayer with the women and Mary the Mother of Jesus and with His brethren".² If we consider these words closely we shall find in them every requisite for a good preparation for the Coming of the Holy Ghost. We find three things recommended in them.

First: retirement, solitude and recollection. The Apostles were bidden not to leave Jerusalem for their own homes; and in this they obeyed by not returning to Galilee to their families and wonted occupations; and the days they spent in Jerusalem were days of sacred holiday. They shut themselves into the large house on Mount Sion, and never left it except to go to the Temple.³ Therefore the first condition of a good preparation for the Holy Ghost is to break off with unnecessary business and intercourse with the world, and to live in retirement removed from all avoidable distractions. Solitude is always a penance to us creatures of sense, but it cures the heart of its attachment to what is exterior and passing, of dissipation and over-effusion. Furthermore, it draws on us great graces from God, breeds holy thoughts within us, gives the necessary means of self-knowledge, and prepares our souls for the visitations of God.⁴ Let us, therefore, if we can, live in retreat during the novena, and imitate the ways of certain religious houses. Let us place the grille of the cloister between us and the sounds and things of the world, and we may be sure that God will give us His blessing.

¹ Luke xxiv. 49; Acts i. 4.

³ Luke xxiv. 53.

² Acts i. 13, 14.

⁴ Osee ii. 14.

Secondly, prayer is recommended. It is impossible to imagine the Apostles and faithful otherwise than in a state of constant prayer during those nine days, partly in the upper room, partly in the Temple. Scripture expressly relates this of them. In His life on earth our Blessed Lord had constantly impressed on His Apostles the necessity of prayer, and of extraordinary prayer at the beginning of extraordinary undertakings. On the eve of one such occasion they now found themselves, and most assuredly they did not neglect to pray with the utmost fervour. The very place in which they were assembled was a motive for prayer. It was the Supper-room, which the last and most sacred memories of our Lord's life and ministry had converted into a sanctuary—into the first Christian church. Therefore the Apostles prayed, and with perseverance. Let us do the same, for by prayer we shall obtain all good things, and without it all is useless.

The third thing recommended is concord and union. This was manifested by the Apostles by their prayer with and for one another. Prayer is powerful in itself, but when many are united in common prayer it becomes irresistible. God yields to such prayer because He does not will to resist it. Our Lord gave a special promise to common and united prayer. "If," said He, "two of you shall consent upon earth concerning anything whatsoever they shall ask, it shall be done to them by My Father who is in heaven. For where there are two or three gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them."¹ The Apostles, therefore, prayed for each other, each for each and for all, because they were united in the same cause and for the same end. What confidence, moreover, must it not have given them to have Mary the Mother of Jesus in their midst,

¹ Matt. xviii. 19, 20.

and to know that her prayer was joined to theirs. What followed showed the efficacy of common prayer. We, too, must unite in prayer. Let us pray not only for our own necessities, but for the whole Church and the whole world. We must—at least in spirit—unite ourselves to all those great confraternities of prayer devoted to an especial preparation for Pentecost. But, alas, those who thus prepare themselves are comparatively few!

Let us during these days often turn our thoughts to that silent house on Mount Sion, and visit it in spirit. Peace and silence prevail everywhere, and a spirit of recollection and contemplation pervades it as though it were a cloister. Speech is rare, prayer is frequent. Those within meet often under the great lamp in the dimly lighted hall and there pray and sing canticles. For hours at a time they remain in contemplation, their ardent prayers and sighs ascending like incense to the throne of heaven. The *Veni Sancte Spiritus* and the *Veni Creator* are, if not in words at least in sense, for ever in their hearts and on their lips. Let us enter that blessed house with them; let us join ourselves to them, and strengthen our poor prayers by theirs, thus to make them more pleasing to God. Let us offer to the Holy Ghost the prayers of the early Church on behalf of the Church of to-day. The two are one and the same, and meet there in spirit. The upper chamber of the house on Mount Sion has never been empty since the days of the Apostles. Throughout all ages succeeding generations of Christians have met there in spirit to prepare for the Coming of the Holy Ghost. At this season we find the whole Church assembled there—the missionary and the student waiting for ordination, the Pope and the Bishop, the monk and the nursing sister, teachers and their pupils, and all others, especially all interior and pure souls striving for perfection.

All are together in one spirit. This novena is the great prayer-meeting of the whole Church, united in calling to the Holy Ghost to visit us and communicate Himself to the whole world.

Let us join in this work of prayer; let us join the glorious ranks of those before us. What an honour it is to pray side by side with the representatives of the Church of God! What confidence should it not give us to see our unworthiness and incapacity thus covered! But let us do what little we can to further the work. The needs are many, the work to be done is grave and important! However, one Pentecost can suffice for everything. Let us then have a share in those great results which it is our Lord's intention should come from this Pentecost. The way to attain this end is to keep these days of preparation with zeal and fervour.

CHAPTER LI.

THE FEAST OF PENTECOST.

“THE Spirit of the Lord hath filled the whole world.”¹ With these words the Church begins to-day her celebration of the Holy Sacrifice and her Office. They express in brief the whole significance of the great feast we are keeping. Pentecost is great because it is the Feast of the Holy Ghost, being His for three reasons. (1) Pentecost is the anniversary of His Descent on the Apostles; (2) it is the commemoration of His abiding presence in the world; and (3) it is the renewal of His Mission and a continuation of the dispensing of His gifts. Let us dwell on these three points to the greater glory of the Holy Ghost.

1. Pentecost is the anniversary of the Descent of the Holy Ghost. In order to understand the grandeur and full significance of this mystery we must consider who it was who descended. It was no saint, no prophet, no angel, sent down with a message from God to mankind. No, it was the Saint of saints, the Teacher of prophets, the Lord of angels, possessed of all power and majesty, one of the Divine Persons of the Blessed Trinity, who proceeds from the Father and Son and is equal to Them in nature, power, eternity and divinity, and was sent by Them. He was in the world from the beginning as Creator and Preserver; but He was invisible. He first manifested Himself at the Baptism of our Lord under the form of a dove; but His appear-

¹ Wisd. i. 7.

ance was only for a moment and for one specific object. But at Pentecost He descended solemnly and revealed Himself to the whole world.

And how did He come? He came in a way befitting a God who is majesty and love—with glory and goodness, with majesty and gentleness combined. How glorious was that first Pentecost as described in the Acts of the Apostles! The sudden sound of the mighty wind; the parted tongues of fire which rested on the disciples; the Apostles themselves who, possessed by the power of God, went forth and spoke to the people; the words full of fire and life which fell from their lips; the stir among the people who were converted by thousands, confessing Jesus and being baptised in His name, under the very eyes of His enemies, in sight of Calvary, and but a short time after His death! These are in very truth great facts and prodigious signs which proclaimed the God of majesty and love such as He had been foretold by the prophet Joel.¹

And to whom did the Holy Ghost come? First of all, directly to the Apostles and disciples. To them had He been promised, and they, with Mary the Mother of Jesus, had been earnestly beseeching Him to come. But it was not they alone who were to receive Him. Through them He was to be given to all the world. The Apostles were the vessels of the Holy Ghost whence He would overflow on all mankind. He is the God of all men, and all were to know Him and receive Him.

And why did He come? For what purpose? Not to judge, condemn and punish, but to heal and to save. He did this, in the first place, by revealing Himself in His nature and being as the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity, that He might be as such acknowledged, adored and included in the confessions of

¹ Joel ii. 28.

faith, and be thereby the cause of salvation. Again, He confirmed the Mission of Jesus Christ, realised His promise, crowned His work, and glorified Him by the striking testimony of miracles and prophecies. Further, He called the Church into activity, and by her contracted an everlasting union of love, grace and salvation with mankind. These were the gracious purposes He had in view by coming; and let us not forget how unworthy the world was to receive such a favour. The Holy Ghost dwelt in the world, He had created it and preserved it, but it did not know Him. More than this, it was in a state of blind revolt against Him, and had but just before branded itself in His sight with the unheard-of crime of deicide. It would have been but fitting that His Coming should have been to judge; but instead, it was to be the beginning of the world's salvation.

O blessed Coming of the Holy Ghost! O glorious Feast of Pentecost! How many blessings has not that day brought to us! With it came the renewal of the world, the destruction of idolatry, the downfall of Judaism, the proclamation of the new law, the birth of Christianity, the dawn of a new age and new dispensation. We owe all the glories of Christianity to His Coming. But Pentecost was, above all, the gracious revelation of a God descending to be with the children of men, and the visible dwelling on earth of the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity. God imparted His final communication to men by the Gift of His Spirit—the love of God. Let us rejoice and make glad on this blessed day, and thank God from our hearts for all the great and glorious things He has done for us on it. Let us go forth to meet the Divine Guest who is coming, and welcome Him to this earth of ours which He has filled with His presence in such an unheard-of and mysterious manner. Let us receive Him as did the Apostles with lively faith and deep

humility of heart. *Spiritus Domini replevit orbem terrarum; venite adoremus!* Let us pray to Him and thank Him fervently for all His benefits poured on us especially this day.

2. Pentecost is also the Feast of the commemoration of the abiding presence of the Holy Ghost. Pentecost does not only remind us of something which once happened but is now over; but also of something which always remains a living fact—namely, the presence of the Holy Ghost in the world. On Whitsunday He did not come as in previous apparitions to remain for a few moments and then disappear. No, He came to remain always with us by His abiding presence in our world. The Holy Ghost is, therefore, as really present with us as He was with the first Christians on the Day of Pentecost, though not apparent to our senses as He was then. Our Lord assures us expressly of this abiding presence of the Holy Ghost when, in speaking of the Descent of the Spirit, He said: "I will ask the Father, and He shall give you another Paraclete, that He may abide with you for ever. The Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not nor knoweth Him: but you shall know Him, because He shall abide with you, and shall be in you."¹ He is, therefore, really in the world, though the world does not see Him.

But where is the Holy Ghost present in this peculiar way? First, He is present in every sanctified soul which is in the state of grace and is, therefore, a temple of the Holy Ghost.² This presence is, however, very insecure, because there is no individual who cannot lose the Holy Ghost with the loss of sanctifying grace by mortal sin. But with and above this presence of the Spirit there is another, absolutely secure and lasting, which never ceases and never will cease—namely, His presence in the Church. She can never lose the Holy

¹ John xiv. 16, 17.

² 1 Cor. vi. 19.

Ghost, because she is the Mystical Body of Christ, indestructible and unchangeable. Our Blessed Lord's natural body was never without the Spirit, so neither is His mystical body. As the Holy Ghost was nowhere present in so sublime a way as in Jesus Christ, so, in this world, He is nowhere present in so sublime a way as in the Church, and if He could cease to dwell in the world otherwise He would still remain in it by His peculiar presence in the Church. He dwells in her not only as sanctity and as sanctifying His representatives in her, but through them He sanctifies the remainder. He dwells in her as the Spirit of truth and grace in the heads and pastors of the Church, the visible teaching-office, and in the holy sacraments. He is in those wondrous miraculous gifts which are always in the Church; He is in her government, and, though not visibly, always defends and preserves her, and this so certainly and undeniably that all historical facts must be repudiated as untrue if His peculiar presence in the Catholic Church is to be denied. In the Old Testament the Ark of the Covenant was the visible sign and pledge of the peculiar action and presence of God with the people of Israel; so now, under the New Testament, the Church is the peculiar dwelling-place and sanctuary of the Holy Ghost in this world, and the visible pledge of His union with us. So long as we possess the Church we possess the Holy Ghost in our midst. He may well speak to us in the words of our Lord: "Behold I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world".¹

This peculiar presence of the Holy Ghost in the Church is an inestimable blessing for us. First, it is a great honour to live immediately under His guidance; secondly, it is a great joy and consolation to have our Comforter always with us; and, lastly, it

¹ Matt. xxviii. 20.

gives us great confidence, and is a strong motive for loving and reverencing the Church, by showing us how entirely she is the work of God. Our Lord Himself founded her, and the Holy Ghost quickens, governs and defends her. God never leaves His work out of His hand. We, therefore, owe the Holy Ghost the greatest debt of gratitude; and it is but fitting that there should be one day, one feast in the year to bring before us His presence in us and in the Church. We must profit by Pentecost to do our best to promote and prove our gratitude for His gracious presence, by which He fills the whole Church in the same way that we are told He filled the whole house in which the Apostles awaited His Coming.¹ Our thoughts can never dwell too much on His presence. He is not only necessary, but essential to the Church as the Church of Christ; for He is, so to speak, her Spirit and Soul.

3. Pentecost is the renewal and continuation of the Mission of the Holy Ghost. He came down not only to abide in the Church and world, but also to work in them. We can see the effects of His operations in the Apostles, in whom He at once revealed the fulness and magnificence of His gifts; and also in the number of those who were converted and baptised. Again, we can see their effect in the Christians of the first days, such as Stephen and Cornelius, the first-fruits of the Holy Ghost and glorious representatives of the new dispensation. Both Jews and Gentiles were astonished by the greatness of the virtue and power manifested in them.

Such were the communications, such the action of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost; and ever since then He has worked without ceasing in the Church and in the world. Each time that a soul yields to the light of faith; each time that a heart is converted from sin and

¹ Acts ii. 2.

is justified; each time that sanctifying grace and the supernatural virtues are infused into a soul; each time that the sacraments are administered, grace increased, progress made from good to better, or merit gained under the influence of actual grace, behold a communication of the Holy Ghost, a renewal of His operations, another Pentecost!

Pentecost, therefore, is not over. It is never over, but is repeated again and again in all ages and all places. The Holy Ghost desires to communicate Himself to the whole world, and the whole world can receive Him if it will. We have, therefore, no occasion to envy the Apostles and early Christians; for we only need to prepare ourselves to receive the Spirit as they did, and He will come to us. They believed, did penance, prayed and expected His Coming with desire and confidence. If we do this we also shall receive the Holy Ghost; for He desires nothing more than to communicate Himself and His Gifts to us, and work in us. This is His exterior work: to purify, sanctify and bless the world for time and for eternity by communicating Himself to His creatures, by perfecting in them in a mysterious manner the Mission of the Divine Persons, by receiving them into the life of God and into the joy of the Father, whence they proceeded by the eternal counsels of goodness and mercy. Such is the communication, such the action of the Holy Ghost in us!

How inexhaustible and truly divine is the goodness of the Holy Ghost in communicating Himself to us so often and in making us children of God by this communication of Himself! The Blessed Trinity is ever busy on our behalf, and each of the Divine Persons is active in giving us His divine life and in uniting Himself to us. Let us admire this goodness of God and let us thank the Holy Ghost with a full heart. Let us prove our gratitude by responding to His desire

to communicate Himself to us, and by preparing our hearts to be fitting dwelling-places for Him, and by imploring Him to prepare the whole world in like manner. *Veni Sancte Spiritus!* Come, Holy Ghost, and fill the hearts of Thy faithful and of all the children of men! Such would be a celebration of Pentecost well pleasing to the Holy Ghost. For this end He causes His feast to recur year after year, not only as a reminder of the benefits of the first Pentecost, but as a renewal of it in our hearts. He desires to be to us what He was to the Apostles and first believers, namely, the sweet Guest of our hearts, our Counsellor, our Comforter, our Father, our All.

Thus Pentecost is a beautiful, great, sublime and consoling feast—a feast full of joy, grace and glory, fitted to fill the whole world with gladness. The ecclesiastical year rolls on like a stately river from feast to feast, each one approaching heaven nearer and ever nearer, until they culminate in the Feast of the Ascension, and our Lord goes up on high. With Pentecost the ray of glory strikes downward and earth-ward once more, and the Person of the Holy Ghost descends with the riches of His grace, to dwell on this earth of ours and in the Church in an unheard-of way, and load us with His eternal blessings. “It is undeniable,” says a modern theologian, “that Pentecost fills a unique position among all the other revelations of the Holy Ghost in the Old and New Testaments, both on account of the fulness of the grace given, the extension of its effects and the duration and mode of its communication. . . . Pentecost is the end and fulfilment of all preceding, and the source of all subsequent dispensations of grace. . . . This communication of the Holy Ghost, following the consummation of the atoning Sacrifice, possessed a fulness superabundantly sufficient to lead the whole human race to its everlasting end, and to make of it the eternal

kingdom of God. On that day the Divine Gift was given without recall and to remain till the end of time, its truth and reality being attested by the most unmistakable signs, and proved in a most striking manner by the great miracles which belong to the history of the Church from the times of persecution even until now." ¹

The Church, filled with joy by the possession of so precious a gift, breaks forth into these words of praise in her Preface in the Mass for Whit-Sunday: "It is truly meet and just, right and salutary that we should always and in all places give thanks to Thee, O holy Lord, Father Almighty, Eternal God, through Christ our Lord, who, ascending above all the heavens, and sitting at Thy right hand, poured out the promised Holy Spirit this day upon the children of adoption. Wherefore the whole world exults in exceeding great joy. As likewise the virtues on high and the angelic powers sing a hymn to Thy glory." Let us also keep this great feast with feelings of holy joy, thanksgiving, adoration and the offering of our whole hearts. Pentecost is the feast of hearts, because it is the feast of the Ruler of hearts, the Holy Ghost. Let us then offer ours to Him, so that He may fill them with His life, with His light and with His love.

¹ *Wirkungen des dreieinigen Gottes*, c. 7, art. 1, by Dr. Schell.

CHAPTER LII.

THE ORDER OF THE HOLY GHOST.

WE have, as far as our poor powers admit of such a thing, followed the Holy Ghost from his home in heaven down to the great theatre of His operations in creation. There remains for us to give a brief retrospect of the ground we have traversed, and put together a few suggestions and motives for worshipping Him. This retrospect will be of the nature of a spiritual memento to take away with us from these meditations.

Our first motive for paying Him special worship is the thought that He is God, and as such must be honoured and loved. How could He not be God, who reveals Himself so wondrously and sublimely in all the realms of life and creation, and in His government, sanctification and perfection of it? What do the other Divine Persons possess that He does not possess; and what do They do that He does not do with Them? All praise and adoration be therefore to the Father and Son in unity with the Holy Ghost! Even in the Heart of the Godhead He draws and wins us by being the Person of love, goodness, joy and beatitude. These are His personal attributes. He is the joy, kindness and consolation of the Godhead. All the exterior works of God are marks of His love and compassion; and the Holy Ghost is the blessed Source whence all created beings drink of life, grace, sanctity and happiness. Creation rests like a gem on the Heart of God, which is represented by the Holy Ghost

as the Person of love. Therefore, not only honour and adoration are His due, but love also in response to His love. We love whatever is good; how then can we fail to love the Holy Ghost who is uncreated love and sweetness, and the unsearchable source of our life? The Holy Ghost is God. We cannot repeat this too often or impress it on our minds too deeply. As God He can never be sufficiently loved and honoured: we can never carry our love and honour far enough.

The second motive is man himself. From whatever aspect he be regarded his existence points to the Holy Ghost. His life, his soul, his body and especially his heart, are a communication and revelation of the Holy Ghost. There is no portion of a man's nature more important than his heart. It is so one with his honour and merit that God Himself values it and demands it. As we have said, the Holy Ghost as the Person of love is, as it were, the Heart of the Godhead, and, therefore, the dearest desire of man should be to give his heart to the Holy Ghost, by making Him Lord over it, and by trying to make it into His image. In this relation to the Divine Spirit man must be regarded not only as an individual, but as a member of society. All society, whether as represented by family, commonwealth or State, exists through the Holy Ghost, and the benefits which accrue to man through these creations of His are simply innumerable. It is, therefore, most fitting that man should confess and love the Author and Preserver of these institutions which are so rich in grace for him. Look at this first from the point of view of religion, by which man is brought most near to the Holy Ghost. Religion is, in other words, all that connects man with God, and the supernatural is the most perfect form of this connection. The Holy Ghost is the Principle of the supernatural life, of its gifts, privileges, virtues

and glories ; and to Him we owe all those things which He dispenses to us as He pleases. In this life of religion man, whatever his state of life, and whether he be a simple Christian or a priest or religious, owes everything to the Holy Ghost who calls him and enables him to perfect whatever may be his state of life. We all stand in a peculiar relation to the Holy Ghost, and even our necessities compel us to turn to Him with supplication and confidence. He was given to us by our Lord to be our Helper and Comforter.

The third motive is the Church. After God and our Lord Jesus Christ the Church is everything to us. She was established by God, and she is the medium by which it is His will to communicate and reveal Himself to us, and it is by her instrumentality that we know, love and serve Him. In her alone do we find the true religion, and she alone is divinely appointed for the salvation of man and the means by which he may reach his everlasting end. The Church is the medium of the true knowledge of God and of the reception of grace ; she is the work and the kingdom of Christ, and by her His life is continued upon earth. To her, our Mother, we may well say, in the words addressed to our Lord by His Apostles : " To whom shall we go ? Thou hast the words of eternal life." ¹ He who has not the Church for his Mother cannot have God for his Father ; and he who has no right to call the Church his home has no right to heaven. To the Church may be applied her own words about our Lady : after God she is our life, our consolation and our hope.

This being so, what must not our gratitude be to the Holy Ghost who called the Church into being, who rules and governs her, fills and quickens her, and is the Principle of her supernatural life ? Without the Holy Ghost there could be no Church, without Him no

¹ John vi. 69.

bishops or priests, without Him no infallible teaching-office, no sacraments, no faithful, without Him no assistance or stability against the exterior and interior powers of destruction. From her deepest foundation to the cross, which is her crown, the Church is the work and fortress of the Holy Ghost. It is through Him and in Him that she is all that we know her to be for us. How fitting is it that we should be grateful to Him to whom belongs this tower of strength in which it is good for us to dwell, and in the abundance of whose good things we rejoice. Yea, everlasting thanks be to the Holy Ghost who has made us children of His Church! What good would anything be to us if we had not her? It is better to dwell in the meanest corner of the House of God than to be seated on the highest throne in the world.

The fourth motive is the world; by which we are to understand that portion of mankind which is outside the Church, turned away from God, and hostile to Him. But, you may ask, what have we to do with such a world? The Holy Ghost is not in it, and how can it be a motive for loving and adoring Him? The very reason why it is such a motive is because it refuses to know Him, and is directly opposed to Him!

The world is, in fact, a society the principles and aspirations of which are contrary to and hostile to the Holy Ghost. What is the spirit of the world? Above all things it is a spirit of greed for earthly possessions and enjoyments. The world is immersed in what is earthly and sensual, and makes an end of what is intended to be the means of life. The Holy Spirit is, on the contrary, the Spirit of Christian hope, the end and happiness of which are to be found in God and in the everlasting possession of Him in heaven. He teaches us, as the Church puts it, how to pass through the things that are temporal so that we finally lose not the things that are eternal, or, in other

words, how to win heaven by the right use and sacrifice of temporal interests. The spirit of the world is a spirit of pride, independence and licence; it denies the supernatural revelation, repudiates the submission of reason to faith and rejects the idea of obedience to the supernatural ordinances of God. It will not admit even the possibility of the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, or of the divine institution of the Church. The Holy Ghost is, on the contrary, the Spirit of truth and the Principle of the supernatural order who bears witness to the divinity of Christ by miracles and prophecies, and who proves the divine origin of the Church by His wondrous preservation of her, by her teaching and by her ceaseless energy. The spirit of the world is the hateful and destructive progeny of egotism, which seeks itself at the cost of everything else and makes everything subordinate to itself. It is in truth a gigantic monster which extends its grasp over all orders of society—family, State and religion—and grinds down all true liberty and welfare in the mill of its own desires. The world refuses to live a Christian and well-ordered life: hence it is unhappy and buries itself beneath its own ruins. But the Holy Ghost is, on the contrary, the Spirit of a noble, ordinate and unselfish Christian love, which does not seek its own, which respects and does good to all, bears patiently with the infirmities of others, returns good for evil, takes strangers to its bosom and makes all humanity into one divine family. When the law of the Holy Ghost rules everywhere then only will order, peace and joy reign all over the world. The world is the enemy of the Holy Ghost, and therefore our Lord said that it could not receive Him, because, by reason of its sensuality, it did not see Him and neither knew nor could know Him.¹

This being so, how many motives does it not afford

¹ John xiv. 17.

us for honouring the Holy Ghost? First, it induces us to make some little satisfaction for the wrong that the world does Him by refusing to know Him and by destroying His works. Secondly, the above motives are our defence against the dangers of contagion, for we are on all sides surrounded and pressed on by the spirit of the world. Lastly, they move us to do what we can to save the world and bring it into subjection to the Holy Ghost. Without Him the world cannot be saved from the evils which beset it; and without His sanctifying and purifying influence it is lost. Let us pray to Him without ceasing to extinguish that wretched race-hatred which, by stirring up merciless wars of extermination, plays into the hands of hell. May He give peace to the nations, quiet and happiness to families, a spirit of obedience to subjects, the unction of gentleness, justice and conciliation to rulers, and to all men the spirit of true Christian love, so that all may be united in the fold of the one saving Church, in which He dwells to rule all things and direct them to their eternal end.

We children of the present age have many and especial reasons for honouring the Holy Ghost. On the one hand He has conferred on us the rare honour and the great benefit of a General Council held but a few decades ago, the decrees of which are like precious jewels in the crown of defined truth, making known that certain and decisive remedy for the evils of the day—papal infallibility. Thanks to the goodness to us of the Holy Ghost the Church is interiorly stronger than she has been for centuries in love for and obedience towards the Holy See and the episcopate. Exteriorly He has made her powerful and honourable in the eyes of the world by the proofs He has given her of His protection, by which she grows in strength and extension in spite of the withdrawal of human aids and in spite of the loss of her temporal heritage. On

the other hand never in any other age has the hostile spirit of the world risen up so mightily against the kingdom of the Holy Ghost; never has the denial of revealed truth been more explicit, nor the revolt against the supernatural more stubborn; never has apostasy from the faith been more general, nor presumption more extreme; never have hatred and jealousy between nations been more ferocious, nor the general despair of peace and happiness more terrible. Under a certain aspect our age may, alas, be termed a sin incarnate against the Holy Ghost, and that in a most hideous and horrible form. In our age a religion, peculiar to itself, has sprung up, the name and nature of which proclaim its desire to banish the Holy Ghost and His worship from the world. We speak of spiritism—a religious system which, by its mysteries and mockeries, encourages sensuality, curiosity and a thirst for marvels, destroys all distinctness and definiteness in doctrine, rejects the acceptance of the divinely established supernatural order and of lawfully defined revealed truth, refuses adherence to the visible Church, and by so doing destroys positive religion as superfluous. At bottom—though sometimes it need be searched for no farther than the surface—this religion is a worship of the devil, and its effect is apostasy from the true faith and confusion of mind. The world must serve some spirit; it must choose between the Spirit of God who is the Spirit of truth, love, peace and joy, the Lover and Benefactor of the world, and the spirit of darkness, the spirit of lies, godlessness and despair, “who was a murderer from the beginning”.¹

See, then, what a number of motives there are for loving and adoring the Holy Ghost, for thanking Him, for offering Him reparation for the injury done to His honour, for being zealous for His glory and for

¹ John viii. 44.

His kingdom the Church, where alone true homage and adoration are paid Him with the Father, and the Son! Let us try to increase His glory by our prayers and labours to bring souls to Him. There have existed several Orders of the Holy Ghost in the Church. Among others there was in the sixteenth century an Order of Knights of the Holy Ghost for the maintenance of the faith and the uprooting of heresy. There was also a very extensive Confraternity of the Holy Ghost which had for its object the sanctification of souls by unity and love. In the thirteenth century we find an Order of the Holy Ghost, the special aim of which was the care of the sick, and this was spread throughout all Germany.¹ The modern missionary Order (1848) of the Immaculate Heart of Mary is named after the Holy Ghost. At this time an Association of the Holy Ghost might do much to bring about the reformation of the world and all connected with it, by an organisation for the ceaseless worship and invocation of the Divine Spirit.² Oh for a second Descent of the Holy Ghost in our own time, by which the chaos of human society might be illuminated and

¹ E. Michael, *History of the German People from the thirteenth Century to the End of the Middle Ages*, ii. (Freiburg, 1899).

² As a matter of fact two Confraternities of the Holy Ghost have been started quite recently with the approbation of the Holy See: one in London, called the Archconfraternity of the Servants of the Holy Ghost (1879), and the other in Vienna under the Lazarist Fathers, having for its object the obtaining of labourers in the vineyard of Christ (1882). The first mentioned of these confraternities was erected by Cardinal Manning, who ascribed his own conversion to the Catholic faith to his practice of the worship of the Holy Ghost, and who saw in it a remedy against the errors of the day and a means for the conversion of England. While we have been writing this book we have had under our eyes several works which he wrote to promote this worship. H. Hemmer, *Vie du Cardinal Manning* (Paris, 1897), p. 93, 256 s.; A. Bellesheim, *Kardinal Manning* (Mayence, 1892), p. 94; E. S. Purcell, *Life of Cardinal Manning*, ii. (London, 1896), 795.

set in order! How necessary is a new proclamation of the Christian law; how necessary a new Pentecost, a new birth for this decrepit world; how necessary the raising up of men of faith and action, men who like Moses would deliver the people of God from shame, captivity and persecution! Oh for a great festival of the Holy Ghost to spread from pole to pole! Some such thought as this must have moved our Holy Father Leo XIII. to enact in his Encyclical of 9th May, 1897, that thenceforward, with the approbation of individual bishops, a public nine days' prayer should be solemnised before Pentecost in every parish church and also in other churches and chapels.

Let us adduce one more motive. It is heaven—heaven the blessed conclusion of this earthly life, the glorious fulfilment of all prophecy, the crown of the works of God, the end of our desires, the abode of undisturbed peace and joy, the everlasting home whence all proceeds and whither all returns, the kingdom of the Son and our inheritance, the bosom of the Father, the communication and embrace of the Holy Ghost! Heaven would not be heaven without the Holy Ghost. He draws us there with strength and sweetness, and He Himself is heaven; for heaven is light, life, love and joy; and all these are the attributes of the Holy Ghost. The blessed in heaven are filled with Him, and inebriated with His love. If heaven is a marriage feast, the Holy Ghost is its joy; if it is a family, He is its Spirit, the same in the Begetter and the Begotten; if it is a union with God, He is the golden ring, set with rubies of love, which unites God to the creature for ever.

Thus do we complete our explorations into the kingdom of the Holy Ghost. We ascended to heaven, to the bosom of the Godhead, and there we found Him, the beloved dweller in the home of God. We searched the orders of creation, and there also we found Him,

to whom we owe life, grace and Church. Thence we returned to heaven, our country and eternal home, and lo He is there also to be our eternal rest, peace and joy! O beautiful and adorable Holy Ghost! Sweet Dove who nestles in the heart of the Godhead and in our hearts also, where shall we go where Thou art not, and where Thou art not our all? "If I ascend into heaven Thou art there: if I descend into hell Thou art present. If I take my wings early in the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there also shall Thy hand lead me and Thy right hand shall hold me . . . for Thou hast possessed my reins, Thou hast protected me from my mother's womb."¹ "Thou art the God of my heart and the God that is my portion for ever."² "Bless the Lord all His works. In every place of His dominions, O my soul, bless thou the Lord."³ Amen.

¹ Ps. cxxxviii. 8 *sqq.*

² Ps. lxxii. 26.

³ Ps. cii. 22.

THE END.

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